

THE FORUM GAZETTE

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Fatehgarh Meet and After

K.S. Khosla



Parkash Singh Badal with his wife at his Chandigarh house

Chandigarh, 1 January 1988

The United Akali Dal (UAD) has not covered itself with glory by allowing the All India Sikh Students Federation (Gurjit group) to use its platform at Fatehgarh Sahib the other day to pass a resolution in support of Khalistan, particularly when UAD is opposed to the demand. The specious argument that it was the handiwork of the government's agents to tarnish the image of Mr. Parkash Singh Badal, who is now trying to bring about unity among Akali factions, does not wash. No doubt Mr. Badal and Capt. Amrinder Singh had left the meeting when the militants captured the platform and passed about ten resolutions,

but none of the other UAD leaders present tried to prevent them from doing so. Even the statements of Mr. Badal and Capt. Amrinder Singh disclaiming their association with what happened does not help much as the damage has already been done.

Mr. Badal should realise that since his release from detention on December 2 last, all eyes are turned towards him to provide leadership to fractured and fragmented Akalis and also to defuse the situation and find a solution to the Punjab problem. His every move is going to be watched very carefully by everyone. Therefore greater the need for him to tread cautiously. Any silence or even muffled protest is likely to be interpreted as approval of the demand for Khalistan. Already the Governor, Mr. S.S. Ray, has come out with a statement asking Punjab leaders to make their stand clear on the Khalistan issue so that there is no ambiguity about it.

The Credibility

At a news conference after his release, Mr. Badal had said the Sikhs had lost faith in the Congress and the Central government and that it must establish its credibility before starting any negotiations. For establishing its credibility, Mr. Badal wanted the Centre to declare general amnesty, punishment of those guilty of the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere in

November 1984, putting an end to fake encounters, repeal of black laws and release and rehabilitation of Army personnel who left their barracks in the wake of Operation Bluestar. But the same argument can be turned against him and he can be asked to establish his credibility vis-a-vis the demand for Khalistan. It is a vicious circle and both the Akalis and the Centre are caught in a cleft stick. The question is who will bell the cat first.

There is a real dilemma here. The Sikhs today are like a besieged community. In fact, it is more than that. They are under attack from two sides. If they criticise the militants for their excesses, they are attacked by them and if they criticise the government for their excesses, they invite their wrath. This explains the silence of the Sikhs, even though as everyone knows, a vast majority of them are not in favour of Khalistan.

The Minority Psyche

The government on its part should realise that the Sikhs are a minority community and minorities all over the world feel discriminated against and fear that one day they may be absorbed in the majority community. The government should be magnanimous towards the Sikhs and deal with them with compassion to remove the sense of hurt which

gives rise to the slogan of Khalistan by the lunatic fringe. The government should in its magnanimity take the first steps towards applying balm to the wounded psyche of the Sikhs and not wait for terrorism to be wiped out first. The government with its vast resources of men, money and power can afford to do that.

Meanwhile, a great opportunity awaits Mr. Badal to lead the Sikhs out of the present crisis. He has first to unite the various Akali Dals. He should make unending efforts towards those goal even if he has to swallow his pride in the process because without unity, the Akalis will not have the bargaining power vis-a-vis the Centre. Divided they will fall and united they will stand.

While unity among Akalis will take time, Mr. Badal has given a correct lead in organising 'dharnas' at the district level this month against repression in a peaceful and non-violent manner. If he is able to steer the Sikhs from the violent path to the non-violent, that itself will be a big achievement. It may be recalled that the Akali Morcha, which began in 1982, was highly successful as long as it remained peaceful. Despite provocations by the militants who emerged on the scene with the rise of Sant Jarnail Singh Binderanwala, the 'rasta roko', 'rail roko' and 'kam roko' agitations launched up to the end of August 1983 were successful. The government instead of confronting the Akalis suspended bus and rail services and the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, had to order the release of over two lakhs persons who had courted arrest.

But the success stopped the moment the Akalis started to help the militants covertly and watching wanton killing of innocent persons. The Akalis lost the game to the extremist

who began dominating the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht. The Akalis by their silence became a part of the vicious circle of violence and counter-violence which has reached a stage where the government is now determined to put an end to it, whatever the cost. The experience the world over has shown that terrorism does not pay in the long run nor does abetment by silence. Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi, acting jathedar of the Akal Takht, tried to convince the boys to have 'gal' (dialogue) with the Centre rather than depend on 'goli' (bullet). He failed to convince the boys and retreated to his village near Chandigarh. Prof. Darshan Singh then tried to lead a peaceful 'march for justice' to Delhi and sit at 'dharna' at the Boat Club in Delhi to press the demands for punishing the guilty of the 1984 November killings, ending fake encounters release of Joghpur detenus etc.

The demands put forth by Mr. Badal are the same as that of Prof. Darshan Singh. In fact, Mr. Surjit Singh Barnala and his party also makes the same demands. It is indeed ironic that when the demands are the same, why can't the various factions of the Akalis get together. Love of 'kursi' and personal ego stand in the way of unity. Observers here feel that if Mr. Badal and Prof. Darshan Singh put their heads together, they might be able to take the Sikhs out of the present crisis. A two-man or even a three-man committee of leaders, including Mr. Barnala, can guide the Akalis particularly when the Akalis have not undisputed leader. But Mr. Barnala must not harp on restoration of popular rule as that is not so important as removing the sense of hurt among the Sikhs and stopping, to quote both Mr. Badal and Mr. Barnala, the repression against them.

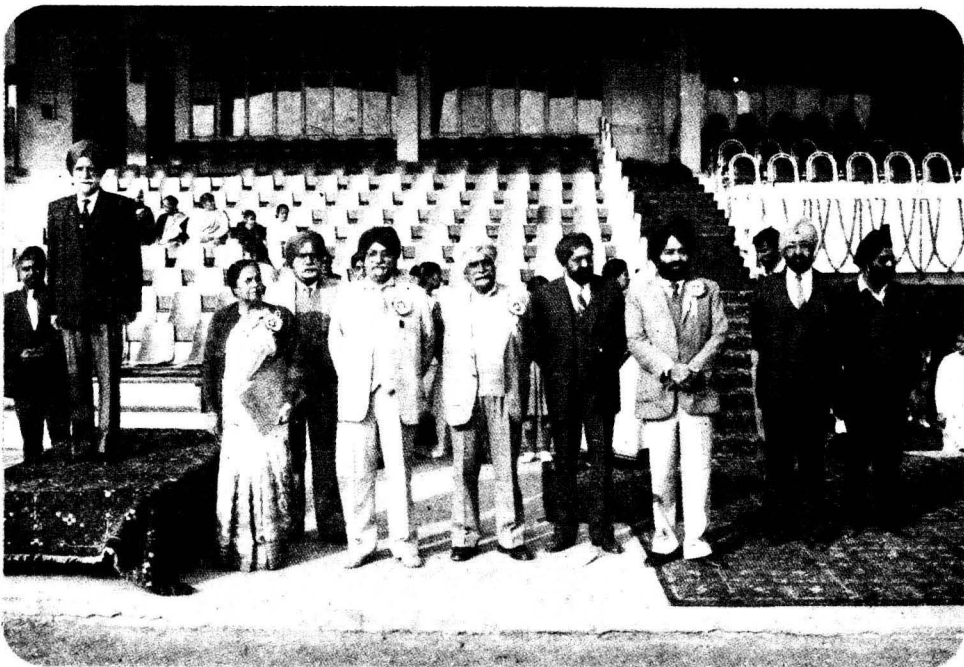
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GAZETTE

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G.N. P.S. Sports Day



Guru Nanak Public School Punjabi Bagh organised its sports meet on 19 and 20 December 1987 at Model Town Stadium. Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora (retd.) M.P. inaugurated the meet, and Air Marshal I.S. Chhabra (retd.) gave away prizes. The pictures here show Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora (retd.) taking the salute at the inauguration and Air Marshal I.S. Chhabra (retd.) releasing the school chronical at the closing.



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SOUND AND FURY

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Mikhail Gorbachev

Bihar was flooded, but Mr. Dubey did not sink—

Atal Behari Vajayee.

The ruling classes have sold art to the makers of soap, shampo and bootpolish

Utpal Dutt

I will either be chief minister or continue to be a legislator. But I will never become another Shankarrao Chavan.

Sharad Pawar

The CPI (M) is not operating in an independent culture. We are operating in a feudal-capitalist set-up all over the country and knowingly we have entered the administration.

Jyoti Basu

The Judges have indicted themselves and they have to explain why they did not follow the statutory provisions of the law.

V.P. Singh

The regime in New Delhi, about every body will inform you, is a compedium of corruption and dectet; umbrage will be taken if some one were however to question its claim of being the true legatee of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals.

Ashok Mitra

The echoes of tumultuous Parliament of 1987 will continue to reverbate until the next Lok Sabha polls whenever they may be held.

S. Jaipal Reddy

The Indian solution can only begin with the recognition of ancient Indian differences; not in an insistence that India is one, but that she ought to be one.

O.V. Vijayan

However the Thakkar-Natrajan report is just a political document and it has violated the provisions of commissions of inquiry act,

Indrajit Gupta

As for the involvement of party workers, I would like to point out that they are expected to serve the people instead of only asking votes at the time of elections.

Janardhana Poojary

The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) which will not plunge into election politics may think of asking people to vote in favour of candidates who will project the interests of the Hindu majority for changing the political atmosphere in the country.

Balasahab Deoras



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THE
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INTO 1988

Most people seem to think that 1987 was an unsettling year for the country. It most certainly was.

Apart from the drought which visits India every six-seven years, there was a major political development when V.P. Singh left the government. After that, events took their own course. One thing led to another. V.P. Singh was expelled from the Congress (I) and ultimately it led to the formation of a new front called the Jan Morcha. All this was linked with two major scandals Fairfax and Bofors. It should not be necessary to go over this ground once again. The important thing to be anxious about is what happens in 1988 and after.

One can afford to be somewhat relaxed about what is currently happening. Rajiv Gandhi has been under pressure for some time. Because of that, he has been doing and saying certain things which fill one with disquiet. For instance, there was that statement about "Nani Yad kra Don Ga." Those who do not know Hindi did not get the full flavour of this remark. When translated into English "I will make you remember your grand mother", it does not have the same impact.

Then there was the remark about a State Government being dismissed even if it had a strong mandate from the electorate. Several people thought that the remark had been made casually. When, however, the Prime Minister repeated that remark on return from his brief visit to Burma, it was clear that what had been said earlier had not been said casually. In fact people in position as powerful as that of the Prime Minister of India do not make such remarks casually. Every single word is carefully weighed.

What does one say about the threat to a Telugu Dasam leader, P. Upendra, reported to have been issued by the Prime Minister's wife? The simplest thing would have been to deny it rightaway and close the controversy. The denial, if made today, will not carry the same effect.

What do these different developments indicate? The only fair explanation that one can offer is that these are signs of desperation. When one is under pressure, desperation is one response. But another response can be to be stoic about things. That is what President Kennedy defined courage as. He said grace under pressure in what constitutes courage.

While Rajiv Gandhi has certainly given some evidence of courage in a few situations, it must be at the same time acknowledged that there is more evidence of irritation rather than desperation. In either case this is not what is expected. Standing up to pressure is, more or less, the first requirement which a man in a powerful office has to have. That is why President Truman once said, "If you cannot take the heat, get out".

There is no question of Rajiv Gandhi getting out. He has given enough evidence of staying power. Not only that, he has occasionally hit back. For instance his reply to the no-confidence motion in Parliament clearly showed that he could even hit back. In other words, if pushed against the wall, he would defend himself and counter attack if need be.

In the situation that prevails in the country, Rajiv Gandhi is the first choice of most people. They do not admire him as they did three years ago. Nor do they go with him all along the line. But they also recognise that there is no clear alternative. V.P. Singh has emerged as some kind of an alternative but not in all parts of the country. He is engaged in a brave effort to line up an opposition front against him. We wish him success.

At the same time, it is but fair to recognise that he is not yet within reach of success. What 1988 holds for him remains to be seen. What it holds for Rajiv Gandhi is equally uncertain. If he is going to feel irritated and use the language of desperation it is not going to help. On the contrary it can hurt.

This is as far as his style of work goes. What about the substance of what requires to be done, the agenda of work in other words. Nothing has been said so far on this subject. It is not because there are no problems. Problems there are and some of them are intractable too. Punjab is one. Sri Lanka is another. The economic situation is yet another. Currently inflation is running high. This has to be brought under control, otherwise things are going to get more difficult.

It should not be necessary to enumerate all the problems. Nor would it be necessary to say how some of them have to be handled. Above all, there is the general feeling that there is a lot of corruption. Who is responsible for it all is a matter into which not many people go. As the head of the government, however, some part of the responsibility does attach to the Prime Minister. If he is to be given credit for a job well done, he also has to take the blame for a job ill done. Corruption is an obvious example and something has to be done to satisfy people on this score.

Another thing may also be referred to. During the last few years of Indira Gandhi's rule, there was conflict and contention. It was hoped that with him taking over, these would disappear. These were certainly driven under ground but it seems that they are re-appearing.

This is not good for the country. In certain cases, the Prime Minister has gone out of the way to create contention his saying, for instance, that a State Government, even if it had a massive majority could be removed from the office provided it was anti-national, is an example. Who is to decide who is national or anti-national? Certainly not he. He is the leader of a political party. As such he cannot be unbiased in his approach. Several people refer to Farooq Abdullah being described as anti-national but now he is looked upon differently because he has allied himself with the ruling party.

Remembering Dr. Ganda Singh

Amrik Singh

The death of a revered teacher is next only to that of one of the parents. It is they, more than anyone else, who between them shape one into the kind of person one becomes.

Recalling Dr Ganda Singh, my memory goes back to over half a century back when I joined Khalsa College, Amritsar. While known as a historian today, he did not teach us history; he taught us Divinity. It took me some years to learn the reason for it. When he joined the college, his educational qualifications were only those of a Matriculate. After his schooling, he had joined the Forman Christian College, Lahore, but had interrupted his study to join the army. After about 15 years, when he returned to India and was appointed on the staff of the Khalsa College, it was not possible to fit him into the academic hierarchy. That is why he was asked to teach Divinity for which too he was not particularly qualified but that was a job which did not require approval by the university.

It was unusual for a man who had no formal qualifications or training to make his way into teaching. Actually teaching was the label that he carried. His real job was to do research. During his decade or so in Iran, while working for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, he made a couple of stimulating contacts and got interested in Punjab history. In this process he entered into correspondence with Karam Singh, another self-taught historian, who had done some pioneering work during the preceding few years.

In the course of his visits to England, France and a few other countries he picked up books and started building up a personal collection. In course of time he got so involved that he decided to give up that job and come back to India. Those were days when even private candidature was frowned upon. Consequently he followed the path others had followed for sometime. At first he did Gyani, then Inter and then B.A. Most of this happened when I was a student in that college.

After he had finished his B.A. he went to Aligarh for his Master's in history. He had already published several books and was known to all the leading historians of the country, including Prof. Habib of Aligarh University. Those two years at Aligarh were fruitful in a number of ways and he always looked back upon that period with great affection and gratitude.

He was about 40 years old when he went through this drill of acquiring degrees so as to be able to be accepted as an academic. Meanwhile, his research work progressed very rapidly. One of his great strengths was his ability to pick up languages. He had already picked up Persian and Arabic

(including some of its dialects) during his stay in the Middle East. He also knew Pushto. In addition to English, he picked up some French also.

It was somewhere in the late 30's that he started learning Marathi. Through his friend, the famous historian S G Sardesai, he discovered that owing to the long Maratha connection with Northern India and Punjab, there was a good deal of material available in the archives at Poona. In order to be able to have easy access to that source material he acquired considerable proficiency in Marathi. I remember when I was still a student that he would go and spend his summers in Poona.

In fact there was hardly any summer vacation when he was in town. He would go to different parts to India in search of material and explored every single worthwhile library including the well known ones at Rampur and Patna. It was in the course of this travels that he conceived the idea of preparing a Bibliography of Punjab. This was a task which took him a couple of decades to complete. But when he eventually did complete it, it was hailed as an aid to scholars the like of which was not to be found in respect of most other states or regions in the country.

It took everyone sometime to get past his gruff exterior. Inside he was a man of pure gold. I have yet to come across another person in my life who was more unselfish. When it came to his work he was utterly selfless but in regard to other matters he hardly had any attachment to anything.

I remember going to his house as a student. All that one could see is his house was a table and 3-4 chairs and a few beds. For the rest there was nothing by way of furnishings or furniture other than the

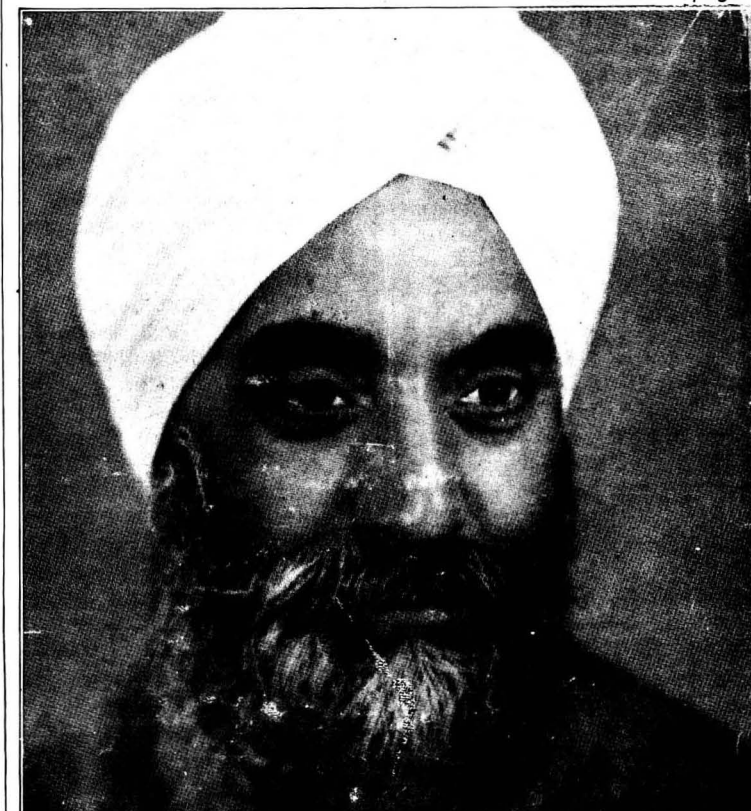
almirahs full of books. Jawaharlal Nehru's Auto-biography was published in 1936 and cost Rs.7/- at that time. He bought a personal copy when his salary was only Rs.110/- per month. I remember both these details because I was struck by his dedication to scholarship and the uncommonly abstemious conditions in which he lived. One hears of things like that. But there is nothing like being in daily contact with someone who lives up to what is talked about.

Another thing that struck me at that young and impressionable age about him was that he would never talk about himself nor ask for anything. He was so extraordinarily reticent about his personal problems that during the half century that I know him I never heard him complain about anything. He had his share of sorrows and struggles to some of which I have already referred. But there must have been so much more that was beyond my knowledge. How could a student know what his teacher was passing through. Some of these things I discovered much later and then put two and two together. At some stage in his life he must have taken the decision never to grumble or complain. There are some of us who think that. But there are very few of us who can really live up to that ideal. He most emphatically did.

During the partition, he gave evidence of great staying power and total calm. Personally he was not affected by it for he came from Hoshiarpur district. But I know the dedicated work that he did during those troubled months. In some of them I assisted him as a junior. In every situation he was a picture of calm, strength and ungrudging dedication.

In 1948 he was invited to be the Director of Archives in

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Dr. Ganda Singh (This picture was taken some two decades past)

Who is Anti National Rajiv Gandhi and Opposition Governments

Wing Camr. R.S. Chattwal (Retd)

The Prime Minister while replying to the Opposition sponsored no-confidence motion in Parliament said in a most belligerent tone, "even today if I find that any government is going in an anti-national direction, I will dismiss it—no States having non-Congress (I) have." He assumed for himself the role of the defender of the national interest and the final arbiter of Indian nationalism.

On return from a state visit to Burma, he reiterated the same even though he clarified he had no particular State in mind when he had stated that any government indulging in anti-national activities would be dismissed. But he further elaborated that his consideration would be based on the assessment of the Home Ministry.

These remarks set in motion a wave of shock and concern in the country, particularly the States having non-Congress (I) governments. The entire media came up with editorials and articles on this remark of the Prime Minister.

Who is Anti-national

The Hindustan Times under the heading "Not By Confrontation" on 18th December '87 has questioned "If the Prime Minister is sure that no state Government is anti-national what is the relevance of the dismissal he has propounded?" The paper further asks, "What precisely does 'anti-national' mean? Who will decide who is anti-national, is also a moot question."

It adds, "The general statement which he (Prime Minister) has made has only deepened the misunderstanding between Centre and the non-Congress (I) States." The paper offers the advice "The days of the same party holding the reins of office at the Centre and in the States are over. When different parties are in power, adjustment and compromise, not confrontation keeps the federation intact. The war of attrition between the Centre and the State will only damage our federal set-up."

Against Constitution

The Indian Express on December 17th under the heading "A timely warning" writes, "The presumptuous and peremptory remark of the Prime Minister militates against the letter and spirit of the Constitution," and warns that "patriotism is not the exclusive preserve of the Congress (I) men alone."

The Times of India in November 18 under the heading "Nationalism Test" recalled the instances when Congress (I) Central Government used the nationalism idea for political purposes.

i. "Akalis were anti-national in 1984. He (Prime Minister) said so at countless election rallies. In fact he went a step further and claimed that the entire opposition was anti-national. Six months later...Akalis were jolly good fellows."

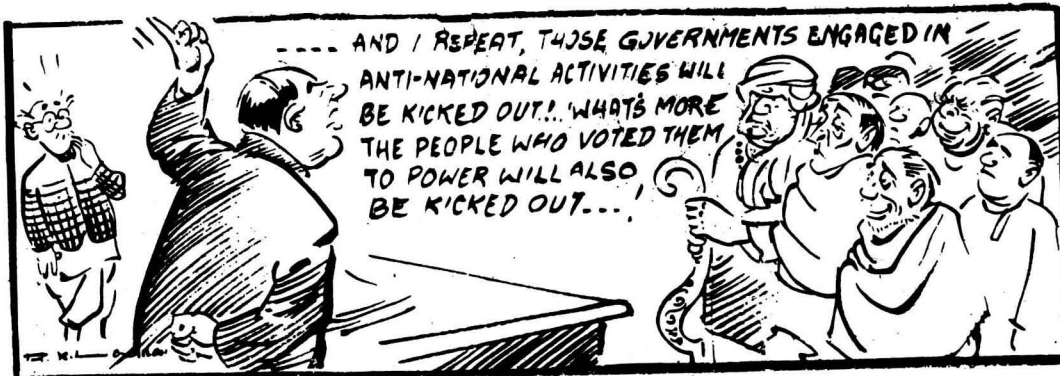
ii. "Dr Farooq Abdullah was deemed a great threat to national security when his ministry was manoeuvred out in 1984....Dr Abdullah's status has undergone a total change and now Mr. J.M. Shah wears the anti-national badge."

iii. Nagaland Chief Minister Mr. Jasokie, who presumably was a nationalist of unblemished credentials as long as he was in the Congress.

iv. Mr. Buta Singh has denied that he called Mr. N.T. Rama Rao anti-national, a furore this remark caused...has not died down yet.

Sole Repository

The Times of India also shares the apprehension expressed by the



Hindustan Times and other papers states, "Congress visualises itself as the sole repository of nationalism." The implication of Mr. Gandhi's remark are very serious indeed but showing his concern for the upkeep of the image of the Prime Minister the paper regrets, "Mr Gandhi's latest pronouncement is unlikely to do any good to his dented image."

Giri Lal Jain on 23rd December tried to bale out Rajiv Gandhi of this arrogant remark by attributing it to his indecisiveness when he says, "He has been combative in his dealings with opposition leaders, too, without being decisive; that would explain his statement regarding his right to

dismiss a chief minister guilty of "anti-national" activities."

The Chief Minister of West Bengal Jyoti Basu, called the attitude of the Prime Minister's threat to dismiss the State government itself as "anti-

On the Defensive

The Statesman on 18th December 87 under the heading "P.M. on the Defensive" regretted that in the reply of the Prime Minister to the no-confidence motion, "national." Mr Basu has not wanted to know as to who will dismiss the central Government, if the Central Government itself is anti-national in its action and deeds.

There was not even a hint or

explanation of the ill-considered sheet fairly drawn of the much publicised efficiency drive in the public sector undertaking and no analysis of the likely impact of the drought on the future economic growth. In short, Mr Gandhi once again mistook debating points for good politics"

The paper was surprised that "he (Prime Minister) is the final arbiter of Indian nationalism." "The hasty clarification (press conference) on return from Burma merely confirmed that the Prime Minister takes his onerous responsibilities lightly."

DR. GANDA SING

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PEPSU. By then he had already made a name as an historian and his choice was widely acclaimed. He stayed in that job for 5-6 years. During that brief period he accomplished two remarkable things. One was to retrieve documents of great historical value in the period when the states were being wound up and the other, almost an extension of it, was to set up a Central Public Library at Patiala. Books were collected from all over and as a source of historical research that library owes everything that it has to the foresight and planning of that dedicated scholar.

Within a couple of years of his retirement from there, Punjabi University came to be established at Patiala and he was invited to head the Department of Punjabi Historical studies. He did that job with great distinction for several years. He embarked upon an ambitious project of an eight volume History of the Punjab. Only a couple of volumes have appeared. For the rest, it seems that those who came after him could not sustain the momentum. Another notable contribution of his was the starting of a six-monthly journal entitled 'Punjab: Past and Present'. Till the day of his death almost, he ran it with a great sense of commitment. It is an indispensable source of study for anyone who wishes to study the history of Punjab.

A decade later, it was my

good fortune to be able to get two gifts from his for the Punjabi University. One was to secure the copyright of his books which number between 40 and 50. The second was to secure the gift of his priceless library for the university. It was to become available to the university after his death; till then it was to stay in his house and be at his disposal. This gift would not have been possible but for the key role played by Prof. Harbans Singh. He it was who managed to pursue the matter with him in regard to both these matters. The university for its part undertook to put up a separate building for it and house it properly.

For some odd reason, the document gifting his library to the University disappeared from the university archive and it looked as if the library would be lost to the University. I pursued the matter for a couple of years with the successor Vice-Chancellors. When I found that the matter had got more complicated than they could handle, on 16.9.1987 I addressed a four-page letter to Shri S.S Ray, the Governor of the State, drawing his attention to the situation that had arisen and invoking his intervention. A few relevant lines from that letter deserve to be reproduced here.

"To permit this library to be dispersed or destroyed would be a great pity. In fact after the

destruction of the Sikh References library in the Bluestar Operation this is the only worthwhile depository of its kind in regard to Sikh history."

The matter was referred to some of the officials but a firm decision is yet to be arrived at. What exactly is happening is not clear and therefore it is not possible for me to say anything with any degree of precision. All that I am concerned with is that the library stays intact and nothing is lost from it. Even if it becomes necessary to compensate the family for it, in some direct or indirect way, it is a contingency that need not be dismissed out of hand. The library would be an asset for the whole state and to lose it would be a great loss to the world of scholarship. Something like that had happened in regard to the personal collection of Karam Singh, the historian. If we allow history to repeat itself even after more than six decades, it would be a poor comment on our sense of commitment to our tradition and history.

His work as an historian has already received considerable recognition. Not being a man of history I am not in a position to say anything much on this subject. All that I can say is that here was a man of remarkable industry and unremitting patience. Step by step he collected data from wherever it could be obtained. His writing may not be marked by any distinction of style but it is always clear and based on solid evidence. I am told by those who know better that it is in

respect of the mid 18th century that he has done his most pioneering work. His biography of Ahmed Sah Abdali which formed his dissertation at the Ph. D level is a standard work on the subject and is recognised as such.

It is as a human being that he made his deepest impact on me. Here was a man who did not believe in ostentation and never advertised himself. He always regarded any such thing as vulgar and never permitted anyone to say anything flattering to his face. In fact he was exceedingly bashful about himself. He never sought any recognition or reward. Whatever he got came to him unasked and that, properly speaking, is true recognition.

The last couple of years of his life were marked by failing eye sight. He could work only during the day and not under any artificial light. This restricted his activity somewhat. But he kept on working nonetheless. I remember once asking him as to how he had taken to the life of abstinence and scholarship and who has been his model. He did not reply to that question clearly, but simply raised his hands towards the heaven and said, "He alone knows". He was not only an outstanding scholar, he was also a good and God-fearing man. To be able to say this about anyone is more than falls to the lot of most of us.

The Problem of Communalism: A Democratic Rights Perspective

Manoranjan Mohanty

(One major challenge faced by the democratic rights movement in the country relates to the spectre of communalism. Whether it is the increased frequency and intensity of communal riots, or an all-pervasive increase in the mistrust with which communities look upon each other, this phenomena has not only blunted or diverted the already weak struggle for justice and equality, it has also led to deep fissures and divisions within the various human rights groups themselves.

What does a human rights group do in the event of a large scale communal breakdown? Be it the continuing imbroglio represented by Punjab, or the emerging movements in Gorkhaland or Jharkhand, or the state managed massacres of Muslims in Meerut—and one can continue to expand the list of examples—is it enough to publish an investigation report, release statements to the press, routinely blame the 'law and order' machinery for being biased, violent and unconstitutional? Increasingly, the groups have found that even if they can reach a consensus amongst themselves, their statements and perspectives are seen with complete mistrust by at least one section of the population. In most cases, the civil and democratic rights groups have been denounced for their pro-minority bias and their antipathy towards Hindu interests. The state machinery too is seen in partisan terms—an oppressor by the minorities and a protector by the others.

In such a situation of polarisation what should the democratic rights groups do. What stand, for instance, should they take towards the arming for self-defence—a process which is clearly evident in all religio-cultural groups. Who do they attempt to communicate to, and in what terms? Will mere reports, pamphlets, posters, and morchas either appealing for communal harmony, or for punishing the guilty, do?

It is now passe to add that the situation is complex and warrants no simplistic response. That is of course so. But there is a need to put forward both an alternative understanding, as also suggesting possibilities for intervention. Prof. Mohanty, a leading civil rights activist, has in this 'brief and tentative piece', attempted to pull together a framework. A different version was presented as an inaugural address for a seminar on Communalism organised by 'The Institute for Jammu and Kashmir Affairs' in February, 1987.

Many liberals had believed that the process of modernisation would be accompanied by new values of enterprise, competition and rationality, which would replace specific cultural identities like religious identities. The socialists believed that in the course of class struggle new values of the working class like those of solidarity, struggle and rationality would be the new motivating principles. History has proved both these assumptions inadequate. All new value have to negotiate with cultural identities and produce a specific mix in each situation.

It is not an accident that during the last decade or so, there has been a decline on the democratic rights front while we have seen a steady rise in communal tensions in India. In the current discussion on communalism in the country, a new dimension needs to be added, i.e., the democratic rights perspective on the problem of communalism. We have seen several attempts at theorisation, re-interpretation of history finding socio-economic basis in communal tensions, relationship between religion and politics and so on. But few people have seen the linkages between authoritarianism and communalism. I would like to submit for consideration the view, that attacks on democratic rights of deprived groups of various kinds, are a major source of forces giving rise to communal tensions. Therefore, the perspective on the handling of the communal

problem has to emphasise the need for a progressive realisation of democratic rights. From this viewpoint, let us identify the contemporary problem of communalism, attempt a diagnosis of this problem to seek explanation and then spell out a perspective for handling the problem.

The Problem

Many today feel that the magnitude of the problem of communalism has overtaken other problems like poverty and unemployment. There is widespread cynicism and even helplessness, not only among leaders but also intellectuals and the organs of public opinion on this question. Even though we see long discourses in the editorial pages of the newspapers, fervent appeals by politicians for communal harmony, and the occasional out-burst of overconfidence by managers of the state, if you



scratch the surface, there is widespread helplessness.

Undoubtedly, the frequency of communal riots has increased. Some areas which had never experienced communal tensions before, have become scenes of riots of serious magnitude. The language of communication has increasingly acquired communal overtones. Not only confined to speeches of political leaders, it has spread to categories used in scholarly discussions. The social environment has become so surcharged that minor issues provide easy provocation leading to large-scale communal tensions. At the same time, substantive issues which were of secular importance, degrade into communal debates. Processions during religious festivals belong to the first category, issues relating to the civil code, the issue of Urdu language, and women's rights belong to the second category.

The problem of communalism has begun to appear in forms of crystallized ideology and organisation, such that the ideology of communalism is no longer on the fringe of Indian politics. It has crept into the strategy of several political parties. We find a rising assertion of orthodoxy of all major religions of India—Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. We can see the institutionalisation of communalism not only in ad-hoc Action Committees on specific issues, but in stabler forms, almost battle-ready in defence of what they perceive as their natural rights.

But we must ask whether communalism has indeed overtaken problems like poverty or does it only seem so in the heat of the tensions?

Without underestimating the seriousness of the problem of communalism, I would like to suggest that this is part of an

overall process of alienation in contemporary Indian society. Individuals, groups and classes, of diverse identities, are getting increasingly alienated in the process of the functioning of the Indian state. This alienation has manifested itself in various ways with varying intensity at different levels. Communalism is one of these manifestations. The democratic rights promised by the Indian Constitution have been frequently deliberated upon in various platforms. These are being eroded causing alienation among people. Freedom, equality and justice, the fulfillment of cultural urges of groups through political participation within a framework of secularism, socialism and democracy, define our polity and it is a violation of this definition which is perhaps the root of the problem.

It may be worthwhile to attempt an explanation of the communal problem. First, a word about the definition of communalism. While some scholars treat it essentially as an ideology or a belief, others take it as a social phenomenon. As an ideology, communalism refers to the belief that people belonging to one religion also share common socio-economic, political and cultural interests. As a social phenomenon, it refers to an exclusive assertion justified in the name of a group—in this context, a religious group. In my view, the second definition actually includes the belief as a component of this process of assertiveness. We emphasize the aspect of exclusiveness as a characteristic of communalism which ordinarily sees an antagonistic relationship among groups. As for the attributes of communalism, it is not merely a modern phenomenon though it may have modern manifestations. It represents the mix of tradition

and modernity. Scholars have described this social phenomenon in terms of reformulating an ideal past of a religious group, even though it may be historically questionable, converting the social situation into a battle ground against a perceived internal enemy, propounding a romantic call for sacrifice, giving radical or even utopian programmes of rebuilding society, and linking up all levels of the socio-political process to achieve the communal goal by any means. It is not difficult to illustrate these aspects from our own environment. Communalism is, in its very nature, anti-democratic.

A theory which has gained ground in contemporary India to explain the expanding phenomenon of communalism is the theory of the modernisation process. According to this view, as India embarked upon a major developmental process, economic opportunities were rapidly expanded and competition for jobs and commercial and industrial rights grew. In this process, groups staked their claims, locally, regionally and at the national level and these were often backed by communal claims.

There is also a feeling among non-Hindu groups that their gains have been disproportionately low. In fact, there are some studies which show that the Muslim artisans and peasants of U.P. have become pauperised over the years and the ex-Zamindars have not quite made up in life. In the growth of the middle classes in India, according to one view, Muslims have not achieved their rightful share. According to this theory, Hindus have reacted to demands of other communities and have asserted their rights. That is why we see the trend of competitive communalism.

According to another theory, the problem of communalism is a product of India's experience under British imperialist rule. The colonial power, through its policy of divide and rule, contributed to the growth of communalism leading to the partition of India. In the nineteenth century, the growth of Indian nationalism gradually acquired a historical dimension derived from a reformulated view of the Hindu past. By the end of the nineteenth century, a new notion of Hinduism was born with a proselytizing character with scriptures, codes of behaviour and organisation, claiming that it encompassed diverse faiths and cultural identities spread throughout India. The Britishers played up rival social, economic and political claims

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Guru Nanak on Nature of Man.

Ishar Singh

When Guru Nanak came on the world scene man had already lived a long life of thought and philosophy. He was no more a child but an adult in the realm of ideology. He had weathered through the times of various cultures, the Stone, the Austric, the Dravidian, the Mongoloid, the Aryan in the east and Semetic in the west. A vast volume of religious and philosophical literature existed in the form of Veda Samihtas, Brahmanas, Upanisads Smrities, Shastras, Puranas, Torah, Bible, Quran and other holy books. The three vital aspects, the nature of God, the nature of man and the relation between God and man which form the basis of many a system of philosophy and religious sects have all along been considered and brought out in some form or the other both in the east and the west. By looking back on this whole field of literature and ideological history of man it is possible to discern some distinct stages through which man has passed.

It is quite possible to see that before the Aryans began to see divinity in the natural bodies like sun, moon, fire etc., there was the first stage when man assumed all importance for himself and there was no realisation of anything supernatural. Then Man was everything and God was nothing.

In the second stage man began to wonder at the excellency of natural bodies and began to worship them as so many gods to solicit favours from them. After that some of the gods were considered as chief of all gods and Inder, Pusan, Aditi, Prajapati etc., held the positions of chief gods. Then the Upanisads declared in an exquisite and beautiful manner that the Atman or the Self of Man is God Himself. The voices 'Aham Brahm Asmi' (I am God) and 'Tat tvamasi' (God is myself) filled the air. God existed now and was something but man was also something.

Self is God

The ideology of 'Self is God' was propagated loudly by those who were also firm believers of four varnas of humanity. Whatever the intention or philosophy of such distinctions might have been, the Brahmins considered themselves the highest species of mankind while Sudras, the lowest Varna, came to be treated as even less than human, leaving aside the talk as 'Self is God' so far as their selves were concerned. A loud talk and a different practice produced a natural reaction.

The Jaina philosophy appeared which held that man's Atma (Self) could be raised by austerities inflicted on its body to acquire supernatural attributes of a Param-atma but there was no separate authority of Param-atma or God. Similarly, Buddhist philosophy appeared through the towering personality of Buddha which swept aside completely the talk of 'Self is God' and unequivocally deprecated the

varna distinctions among human beings. He declared that existence of man and proper regulation of his conduct in the world was of utmost significance. In both these philosophies man became everything and God as nothing.

Then appeared on the stage of the world one of the greatest spiritual philosophers the world has produced, the Shankracharya, who held that there was the single reality of Brahman (God) and all else including Man and Prakirti was apparent (Mithya) reality and an illusion like that of a dream. God, therefore, became everything and man as nothing.

God and Man

In the west meanwhile some major ideologies appeared which held that God was God and Man was Man. The Lord is Lord and 'Abd' is 'Abd'. A relation between God and man could be established through some 'Son of God' or 'Messenger of God.' God was present both in heaven and on earth but in the form that where there were two men, the third was God, where there were three men, the fourth was God and so on, God is the Creator and man created and quite

dependent. However, the further finer analysis how the dependence of man works in relation to God is not attempted in the western ideologies.

And now, in the fifteenth century A.D. appeared Guru Nanak whose teachings are available in the holy volume of Guru Granth Sahib in the form of a large number of devotional hymns full of praise and love of God. This 'Gurbani' is not in the form of a coherent exposition of any philosophical system. However, spirituality, philosophy and ethics are all present therein and can be sorted out only if some sincere labour is applied to dig them out.

Man and matter are not illusions. They are realities.

"O Lord, the great divisions of thy creation are real; The bodies therein are real"

(Nanak I)

"By law of nature are the creatures of various kinds and colours;

By law of nature is the entire humanity;

By law of nature are virtues, vices, honours and prides;

By law of nature are the winds, waters, fires and the dusty earth;

But law of nature is creation

of thyself who art pure and whose Name is pure." (Nanak I)

The Nature

The nature is an open book. Only the hand of its author is invisible to mortal eyes. The open book can be read by any one. Man is reading it, understanding it and unveiling its hidden mysteries. Scientists are bringing on the surface what is already kept by God deep down in the layers of nature. The mysteries are being unfolded and are becoming realities. Guru Nanak has elaborately described this Nature as base of everything that exists. The sun, moon, earth, fire, wind etc., are realities as we find them in Nature. No mythological meanings attach to them. They are not gods or goddesses. Solar and lunar eclipse are phenomenae of Nature and no sanctity attaches to them. Man is similarly a reality and within God's law of nature. Everything created by God is performing its allotted functions. There is perfect order and no chaos in which the world of great diversity is existing. Everything is bound down within God's will.

"By His will is the world of forms;

The will none can say;

By His Will are living beings;

By His Will they achieve human status;

By His Will are some high, some low;

By His Will are rewards of deeds, sorrows and joys;

(Nanak I)

In the order of God's nature, man's status is highest and he is at the helm of all living beings.

"O Man all living beings are thy servants;

Thou art their ruler on this earth". (Nanak V)

In this order man gets a body composed of natural elements

"Know ye O wise one, thy body is made of five elements (earth, water, air, fire and ether). Each element, Nanak says, will rejoin its origin ultimately". (Nanak IX)

Man's body is a wonderful machine with five sense organs, five action organs, five vital airs, the mind and intellect. Before this machine appears in this world, God infuses in it a part of His own Self, the Spirit, the Soul (Atma).

"O, my body, God has placed in thee His Spirit;

And then have thou come in this world". (Nanak III)

This spirit, the soul is all consciousness, all light and makes the machine of the body conscious and active.

"In everyone is present the light of God;

By His light every heart is enlightened". (Nanak I)

The soul with God's light has all the attributes of God qualitatively though its field of activity is limited. As is the nature of God so does the soul remain behind a curtain not perceptible to ordinary sense of man. Another voice, however, makes itself heard from inside of man. This voice, which is the result of working of the various organs (Indriyas), mind (manas) and intellect (Budhi) is 'I am', 'I do this' and 'I do that'. This 'sense of I' in man is called 'Humanain' in Guru Nanak's philosophy. It is of the nature of free will of man and can work both ways, for good purposes as well as for evil.

"With the sense of I man comes and goes;

With the sense of I he is born and dies;

With the sense of I he gives and takes;

With the sense of I he earns and loses;

With the sense of I he is truthful and false;

With the sense of I he thinks of vice and virtue;

With the sense of I he gets entry into hell and heaven;

With the sense of I he laughs and weeps;

With the sense of I he is defiled and purified;

With the sense of I he is high caste and no caste;

With the sense of I he is fool and wise;

But he has not reached the stage of real Mukti (as long as he is with that sense of I or Haumain)". (Nanak I)



The Temple Mosque Dispute: A Solution

Sampuran Singh

The Sri Ram Janambhumi Yagya Samiti and its cognate bodies demonstrated their bellicose stand on the controversial site with the Uttar Pradesh Bandh on March 29, and one lakh Muslims defended equally vociferously the inviolability of the Babri Mosque in Delhi on March 30. Both days by and large passed off peacefully, some provocative outbursts and spouts of hate and fire not withstanding. That was at the end of March. The next seven weeks was a period of lull and it is both amazing and regrettable that an earlier bout of violence and these gigantic exhibitions of public stir were not heeded as a strident warning of a likely flare-up and both parties and the Central and State Governments evinced no seriousness to use the interregnum for a concerted effort to solve the problem which had agitated the country for well over a hundred years. As it were, the cauldron was left to simmer until it came to a boil in mid-May. Meerut and several other U.P. areas witnessed the loss of over a hundred lives, the massacre in Maliani and hundred of cases of arson and loot. Sensitive Delhi followed suit with unrestrained violence. Later hundreds of miles away in another country ethnic disturbances were staged involving Hindu lives and property in Sind.

It is worthy of note that the Committee set up by the U.P. Government whose report was made public in September has concluded that the May riots in Meerut which resulted in 117 deaths were sparked off by the communal divide over the Temple-Mosque dispute.

The dispute is over the Babri Masjid, a down-to-earth reality and the Chabutara believed by the Hindus to be the birth-place of Lord Rama. Taking up the former first, it may or may not have any commemorative aspect to indicate that Babar or any of his generals built it (say, on the ruins of a temple) to celebrate the Moghul conqueror's victory, and at that spot. Significantly, the decisive battle had been fought at Panipat some hundred miles away and against a Muslim king. (Parenthetically, as regards desecration, no community or religion can boast of a clean record, the Hindus destroying Buddhist and Jain temples, Muslims razing Hindu shrines and Sikhs tearing down Muslim mosques. That is how all conquerors behave, even the Christian Crusaders—a religio-political misconduct, forgivable with the lapse of intervening ages.) But whatever its historicity, the Mosque has stood on the site for centuries, and now, of course, it has acquired a prestigious importance, not so much because of its architectural excellence, but because of the Hindu claims on the site being repeated at least



since 1882-83. The title was, however, not upheld even in appeal by Hindu judges in British times in 1885-86. Any way, the Masjid is an entity whose existence is beyond question.

Coming to the Chabutara, the Hindus have for long held it to be the birth-place of Lord Rama. Now Lord Rama was the son of a great king and apparently it seems just a matter of faith that a mere platform could be the place of his birth. It does stand to reason that the ravages of time, and not necessarily an invader, might have obliterated the magnificent palace of the Lord's birth in 4-5 thousand years.

The following points have a meaningful relevance to the Hindu claim. Some months ago Mr. Shitla Singh, Convener, Ram Janambhumi-Babri Masjid Committee, Faizabad (U.P.), appealed to historians and archeologists to conduct research to establish the Lord's place of birth. This eminent body's approach is scientific and shows promise of a serious quest for the reality. Besides, Dr. Karan Singh, the Founder President of another front-line Hindu organization, in his two-column article which appeared in the Hindustan Times in June this year, while sincerely deploring that "the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Babri Masjid Action Committee have taken up irreconcilable positions" and that "the country is edging towards a virtual civil war", devotes most of his write-up to celebrate Ayodhya as the city of the Lord's birth and on

that account worth of profound reverence. He discreetly if not deliberately avoids any mention of the Chabutara as the Lord's place of birth. Needless to say, his mature views are deserving of every consideration not only because of his personal status, but owing to their sincerity and equanimity. Further, it is pertinent to refer here also to the following announcement in the press conference addressed by Mahant Avaidyanath, President, Sri Ram Janambhumi Mukti Yagya Samiti, and Shri Ashok Singal of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, in Delhi on April 17: "Even in Ayodhya if another place is conclusively shown as the birth-place or Sri Ram, we would shift."

Thus in the face of the above references and in the absence of any concrete authentic evidence establishing its identity, the status of the Chabutara as the Lord's birth-place is open to doubt. All the same, we just cannot shut our eyes to the equally patent fact that it is and has been so held for centuries by crores of a whole community. It is thus part of wisdom and mutual good-will for all of us, Muslims as well as Hindus, to accept it as a matter of honest belief and give it the respect it doubtless deserves.

What happened on December 21, 1949, when an idol of Lord Ram appeared in the Masjid for the first time, is the unfortunate root cause of blood bath and arson at a number of places. Another period of full has followed and all concerned should use this

respite to find a just and equitable solution.

Let us examine the suggestions so far offered.

That the judgement in the suit in the High Court should be awaited (or even expedited) is nothing short of sweeping the dispute under the carpet. Judicial delays are proverbial, and then it is too optimistic to hope that the Court's decision will satisfy all concerned and settle the imbroglio finally. One may well fear that it may not be allowed to be implemented or that other issues may crop up. Again the demand that the case be entrusted to a bench of judges excluding Hindus and Muslims is preposterous in a secular society, casts an undeserved slur on the integrity of our judiciary and will be a bad precedent.

Still another idea is mooted that the Masjid may not come to harm but only cease to be a place of muslim worship. This, however, is an utterly unjustifiable suggestion floated possibly to obliterate in one sweep the fact of 460 years' history. Conceptually, the idea may be suspected to be camouflaged plan for its eventual demolition and substitution by a temple in its place at a future date. It is like asking for a complete uncompensated surrender of the Muslim claim. But will that bring peace to the land?

The conversion of the two shrines by a legislative act (and there is a bill moved in the Rajya Sabha on February 27 by a member of the Communist Party) into a national protected monument—otherwise a well meant proposal—is like voluntarily putting on blinkers and fighting shy of facing plain facts of history. Besides, it is outrageously riging roughshod over the sentiments of both the communities and cannot reasonably be expected to bay to rest the ogre of fundamentalism.

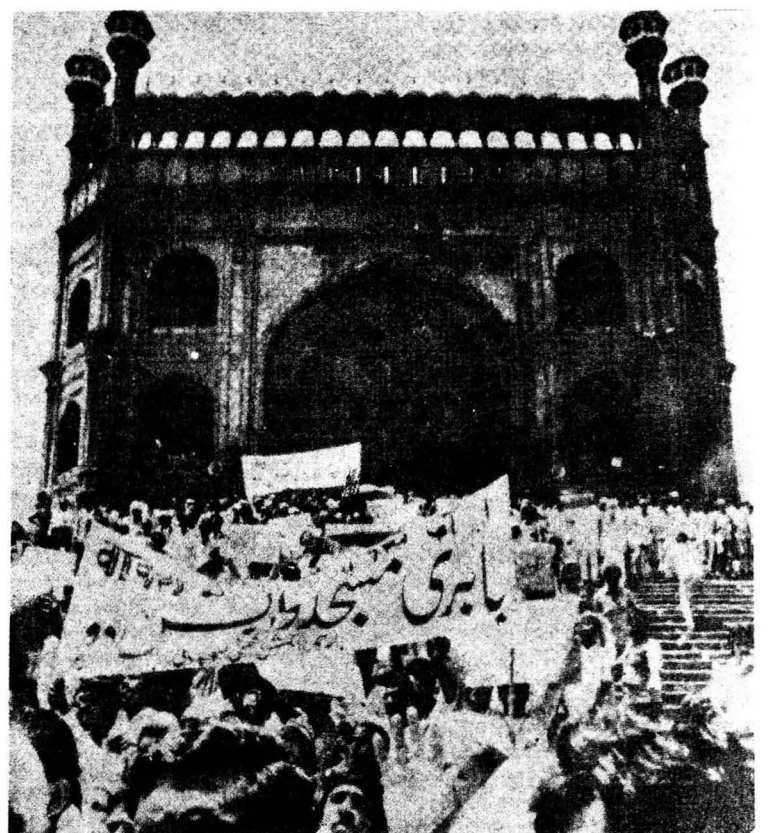
It is a highly deplorable fact that the Administration, taking cover behind the patently transparent excuse of the matter being *sub judice* has so far opted for a wait and watch stance, even though this fence-sitting has caused utter misery

in India and elsewhere. It is then for the sane elements in both communities to come together and negotiate in a spirit of give and take and mutual accommodation. Nobody, not even the hardest fanatics, would wish sorry spectacles of carnage to be enacted again and again and the nation's security jeopardised. We all love the Motherland equally and wish her well.

The most rational solution is the restoration of the Mosque to the Muslims and the building of a temple, commensurate with the glory and greatness of Lord Rama as envisaged by the plans of, say, the Hindu Virat Samaj, on the separate site in the area, leaving out the Chabutara which obviously is not extensive enough for a magnificent structure. And then our modes of worship are so different that it will be judicious to keep a reasonable distance between the two shrines. The desertion of the Chabutara of uncertain validity will be offset by a compensatory allocation of a much large area and should not hurt religious sentiments, for the re-location of the sacred spot does not constitute any serious violation of its sanctity; at least it is venial.

Fortunately, there is a parallel example of sweet accommodation to cite: The Sardar Sarovar and Narmada Dams of the Narmada Valley Project will submerge the *samadh* of Baji Rao in Khargana District and the Shiva Temple of Kasrawad among some ancient monuments of national importance. Incidentally, Baji Rao was the most renowned Peshwa and a hero of many battles who annexed Malwa, Gujarat and Bundelkhand, while the Shiva Temple is worshipped by thousands of tribals of the region as sacred to the deity. These time-honoured places are going to be re-located at new sites and rebuilt without any opposition from lakhs of worshippers.

That is the rational solution capable of effectively defusing this powder-keg at long last; otherwise the nation should be prepared for more holocausts in the country and more ignominy in the world.



Meerut Riots Role of Press

May 1987 Communal Riots in Meerut raised a number of issues. One of them was the role of press. In view of serious allegations against the press the Editors Guild deputed one of its members Mr. Rajendra Sareen to look in to the Complaints against the press and report on its role. Mr. Sareen submitted his report in October which was adopted by the guild on 2 December 1987. While the report bring out some aspects it also has raised a few controversies. We produce here the report, a reaction to it and the response by Mr. Sareen leaving readers free to draw conclusions. eds.

The primary responsibility for the breakdown of law and order and the unleashing of the demon of communal violence rests squarely on the politicians and communal leaders who have for some years been engaged in fostering a siege mentality among the two communities. For quite some time now the campaigns by Hindu and Muslim leaders on the issue of Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid has been conducted on such a high pitch that broad masses of both communities have begun to believe that their very survival depends on frustrating the other community in its resolve. The Hindus believe that the Babri Masjid must be obliterated to correct a historic wrong and the Muslims believe that if they do not resist this onslaught they would face further pressures from the chauvinist elements from among the Hindus. The rhetoric of the two campaigns is pure incendiary. Restraint is conspicuous by its absence. Provocations are manifest. Neither side feels fulfilled unless it can hurt and outrage the feelings of the other.

It is beyond the scope of my study to go too deeply into this aspect, and quote chapter and verse from the speeches of leaders or to name individual leaders, but it is necessary to point out that a state of mind has developed among a not so small body of Muslims that unless they follow the example of the terrorists in Punjab the authorities will not bother to listen to them. On the other hand quite a substantial number of Hindus agree that unless the Muslims are put down with a firm hand they would do a repeat of 1947 and bring about another division of the country. Tragically the conscience of the silent majority among the two communities has begun to acquiesce into this dubious logic even though there is yet no tendency to act in pursuit of that. But with all that there is no social resistance to accumulation of arms.

The failure of the political parties to intervene to set right this explosive situation constitutes the largest single threat to peace and amity. All this is superimposed on numerous local issues where socio-economic factors operate along the Hindu-Muslim communal divide. This is the

backdrop of the communal fires that raged in Meerut.

The failure of the political parties is complemented by the failure of the administration to intervene effectively when law and order break down. In a sense this is also an extension of the failure of the political parties. The accentuation of the communal passions is duly reflected in the responses of the administration and forces of law and order. It is beyond the scope of my study to delineate

precisely to what extent the failure of the administration is to be traced to its sharing the general communal view and what share would be ascribed to the normal incidence of administrative inefficiency or the magnitude of disturbances assuming a character far beyond what could have been reasonably expected. But on the face of it each one of these three contributed to the tragedy of Meerut. There is no escape from the fact that the local administration all too frequently fail to discharge its function to uphold law and order. There is also the unfortunate fact that such lapses have been invariably to the disadvantage of the Muslims. On the other hand there are instances when the Muslims fed with the idea that they should expect the very worst at the hands of the law and order machinery, act not only provocatively but even belligerently by way of pre-emptive strikes against the police force. So a cause and effect situation builds up.

(a) There are a large number

of local newspapers in Meerut both daily and weekly. The important among these are:

- (i) the daily Jagaran, published from Meerut besides nine other centres in U.P.;
- (ii) the daily Amar Ujala, published from Meerut besides Agra and Bareilly;
- (iii) Prabhat (Hindi);
- (iv) Meerut Samachar (Hindi);
- (v) Hamara Yug (Hindi);
- (vi) Mayrashtia (Hindi);
- (vii) Meerut Mela (Urdu).

(b) Among these the Jagaran and Amar Ujala are both well produced publications with modern equipment. They subscribe to agency services besides having a network of their own correspondents. Since the major controversy over Press coverage of Meerut riots centred around these two, I confined my study of local Press to them.

(c) Meerut being so close to Delhi receives newspapers from there. Among these are all the national dailies from the capital. They too have a tremendous impact on the readers in Meerut. There are no serious complaints against these. The Urdu Press of Delhi may be broadly categorised as Muslim, Hindu and secular. In the first category are:

- (i) In Dinon,
- (ii) Nai Duniya,
- (iii) Faisal jadeed, and,
- (iv) Mashriqi Awaz.

In the second category are:

- (i) The daily Partap edited by M. K. Narendra, and,
- (ii) the daily Milap edited by Mr. Navin Suri, Both belong to well-known Arya Samaj families.

In the third category are

- (i) Qaumi Awaz of the National Herald group and
- (ii) Inquilab edited by Mr. Khalid Ansari.

There have been in fact no complaints about the third category. The rule of the first category has generally been not very constructive while the major criticism in the second category is aimed at the Partap.

The sum and substance of the grievance against the Press is on account of

- (a) partial reporting
- (b) partisan editorial comment and presentation of news so that if one goes by one set of newspapers all the suffering was that of the Hindus and if one goes by the other set of newspapers all the suffering and loss was suffered by the Muslims.
- (c) non-reporting of positive stories of Hindus and Muslims saving each other at grave personal risk.
- (d) All too frequently unconfirmed stories were published about events that did not happen or ghastly events were either inadequately reported or ignored altogether. These invariably resulted in sparking off a fresh wave of violence.

The largest responsibility for the damage to law and order insofar as the media are concerned rests on the almost total blockage of information

about the situation on the ground from official sources during some of the most critical phases of the disturbances. The media persons had to function in adverse circumstances with their movement barred from time to time by curfew restrictions, lack of access to official sources, ambivalence of the official sources in scotching rumours. There was a total indifference during April and May on the part of the state administration to the need to organise and facilitate the flow of information. The administration was insensitive to the professional compulsion of the media persons who work against the clock to keep their deadlines. For the whole of nearly three months of recurring flare up of riots there was no district Information officer at Meerut. The State Government did not consider it necessary to strengthen its information outfit by deputing a senior officer from the headquarters to set right the hiatus that had begun to block the smooth flow of informational.

But even so there have been deplorable instances of the two local Hindi newspapers i.e., Jagaran and Amar Ujala ignoring the official version of some incidents that sparked off communal violence. Their reports invariably started with a partial presentation of events and happenings and after exhaustive coverage of certain incidents the official version was either ignored or compressed into a single paragraph or two and tagged on at the tail end in an inconspicuous manner. When I enquired about this from newspapers concerned they explained that the officials invariably preferred to release their version through the agencies to save themselves the bother of informing a large number of journalists. Secondly the official version was always way behind the events and the newspapers and media persons received it late. I am unable to appreciate both these arguments because even if the official version was received through the agencies or became available late, it could have been published as a separate story prominently on the front page. When peace and security of society is at stake, the Press owes it as part of its larger social responsibility to ensure that the other side of the story does not go by default.

The role of Press loomed large in public consciousness because of the phenomenal increase in the circulation of the newspapers in Meerut throughout the period of communal tension. During those dark days of Meerut while all business and professions suffered, newspapers business alone flourished like never before. Both Jagaran and Amar Ujala were the principal beneficiaries of this boom. Their circulations multiplied many times over. There is a keen competition among the two. Neither of them would

K. Narendra Editor Daily Pratap Reacts

Some vague generalisations have been indulged in. Mr Sareen says that besides the local Editors he met some other people in Meerut. Who they were is not revealed. I wonder if he has deliberately not named them because that might betray the source of information on which he has based his impressions.

Now may I say word or two about the report. I have gone through it more than once and I am constrained to say that Shri Sareen has behaved like a Babe in the wood. He is either confused or determined to have his way irrespective of what has actually happened at Meerut. He has been extra generous to me when he says that "The role of the first category has Generally been not very constructive while the Major criticism in the third category is aimed at the 'Pratap'. He has not stated who aired that criticism nor do I know if he accepted what ever was dished out to him by same interested parties or he cared to scam through the writing to which some people were objecting.

I know we are not concerned with the topic of communalism at the moment but I feel that Shri Sareen has been most unfair to me. His report may be made public and there in I would stand damened without ever having been given a chance to explain my point of views. This is a case where some one has been domensed on pure hearsay. I do not know the whether you are interested to know the secular Govt. of India also thinks the same way as Shri Sareen does, that the Pratap is responsible to a very large extent in spreading communal hatred between various communities and the proof of the Govt.'s and Shri Sareen assessment is that during the last forty years a dozen prosecutions have been launched against me under Sections 153 A and 295 A of the I.P.C. and not once have I been convicted. I can understand escaping once or twice but if a dozen times I am discharged by a competent Court-Surely there would be something wrong with those who call me Communal. I have no hesitation in admitting that I am firmly of the view that this secularism and intellectualism being practised these days is the root cause of the communal argies which we are witnessing every now and then.

Let us not forget that newspapers cannot divorce themselves from the prevailing atomosphere. It is just a fashion to say that language newspapers and especially a few condemned once are contributing to the spread of communalism. May be their approach to the problem is influenced by their assersment of the situation but this certainly does not mean that only the language papers are criminals. I wonder if Mr. Sareen was ever confronted with any English language paper also which did not subscribe to the standards adopted by him.

May I also say a word or two about the selection of newspaper men to accompany the V.I.P's. It is all right for you to say that selections he made by the Editors but we must say something about the very basis of the selection by Govt. of Newspapers good enough to be invited. This holds good for the Doordarshan and Akashwani also. The selection at present of such Journalists is clearly partisan. Only favouraites and yemen are picked up but Journalists with Independent views are completaly ignored. Its not that we are crying for selection but we must insist that this selection should be based on some principles and not whims of individuals officers



countenance the a march over information t considered im local readershi norm was to pul miss. This was during the criti prolonged distu A very unsati that has a b functioning of t to the working o journalists. correspondents partiall remu national newspa pay them arou Rs. 150/- per m the agency me around Rs. 50/ the leading pr appoint only t 600/- or so a fresh ones to t seldom absorbi regular vacanci

Respo Saree

A propos t addresse in serious Press as "the v Pratap as w publishing new promotes comr but it is their pr consideration breakdown of la not. I am not co secured a convi others who eng beyond the sco are not suffici advocate more does not mean psychosis. I do Narendra has a the allegations was such a feel



other stealing in publishing it might be tant by the So the basic ish rather than all the more so al days of the pances. factory aspect ring on the Press relates nditions of the he district are only prate. Even ers from Delhi Rs. 100/- or nth. I was told in Meerut get p.m. Some of incial papers nees on Rs. then, recruit e their place them against The result is

that the profession attracts people of means who use it to acquire influence. Others perforce resort to unethical practices. There are some businessmen who work as journalists because they find it a useful aid to business. People interested in the profession have to resort to odd jobs to make both ends meet. But the net result of all this is that the journalist fraternity is vulnerable to all kinds of undesirable pressures and influences. Since almost all leading publications depend on local journalists for the first reports, there are all too frequent instances of wilful distortion of the situation. This is partially corrected by the practice of sending staff teams from Delhi whenever a major event occurs. But the source of mischief remains.

The practice of not

se by Rajendra

Mr K. Narendra's letter of 29 October 1987 to you, I wish to make it clear that Mr Narendra is wrong in assuming that I consider any section of the lines of the piece".

As the Muslim papers of Delhi have been and comments on a continuing basis which nal psychosis. It is unfortunate that they do so essional right to do so. The point at issue for my s whether this factor had contributed to the and order or not. My considered view is that it did erved about the failure of the prosecution to have on over the past 40 years against Mr Narendra or e in propagating insidious communalism. It was of the study entrusted to me. Obviously the laws rigid to secure convictions. It is not my place to aconian legislation against the Press. But that at the Pratap has not been fostering communal ot understand what exactly the grievance Mr inst my report. I have made no comment about elled against Pratap and merely noted that there s. How is that unfair to him?

identifying the communities involved in communal incidents is beginning to prove counter-productive. In Meerut Hindus widely believe that all the suffering in the three-month spell was on their community whereas the Muslims believe it to be the reverse of that. In the absence of precise information people draw inferences. killings in Hindu areas are interpreted to have affected Muslims and vice versa. Rumours spread and by the time the authorities can contradict the reprisals have already taken place. Similarly there is a belief that all the good deeds were done by men of only one community while the evil acts were done by the other community. The truth is that both the shame and the glory of Meerut are fairly even in their spread. It needs to be considered whether this practice should not be modified so that information is made available in a more balanced and credible form. I did discuss this matter with people in Meerut. The general feeling was that this practice had proved altogether ineffective because it left the field free for the communally motivated people to decode the riot news in their own way. The phrase "one community" is construed by both sides to arouse passions against the other. The result is

that the guilty are spared the shame and the victims do not find sympathy.

In my view the Press was not responsible for the creation of the communal riots in Meerut. But a variety of factors discussed here in above contributed to the longest ever spell of disturbed conditions and communal polarisation spread over almost three months and by reporting these from day to day, the sections of the Press became instrumental in the dissemination of information on and about these acrimonious, almost inflammatory aspects. This has been held responsible by various people for the sustained communal passions which in turn were responsible for a series of incidents of retaliatory violence.

The possibility of communal considerations having got the better of editorial discretion at various times is clearly indicated. Even so the fact remains that there was no instance of the newspapers having directly incited their readers to go for the members of the other community. At the same time some among them were inclined to promote and sustain a belief in the innocence of one community as compared to the villainy of the other.

Meerut The After math

Catherin

In the wake of Amnesty International's stark indictment of the PAC, which, the human rights organisation says, deliberately killed dozens of unarmed civilians in Meerut during the recent communal unrest, I am stirred to remember my own is it to the battle-scarred city several months after the May riots.

I was shown the bullet holes in the walls, the scars in the flesh of the survivors and the black and white photographs of 45 men still "missing" from Hashimpura, where a PAC round-up of several hundred Muslim men on May 22 left more than 50 bodies floating in a nearby canal.

In Hashimpura, the narrow alleyways still rattle with the ceaseless motion of power-looms. Above the low, dark rooms that house the looms, families in this predominantly Muslim area live simple, but economically secure, lives. It was here that I met one of the five survivors of the Hashimpura holocaust.

The Threat

Qusman, aged 27, son of Basir Ahmad, used to work on a power loom. now, he walks with difficulty and the aid of crutches. He is still under medical treatment. Ousman was one of about 50 men between the ages of 14 and 70 who were loaded into a PAC truck, drive to a field several kilometers outside the city, were then shot one by one and dumped into the river. The PAC and government officials have

not confirmed the incident. Qusman survived by hiding in river grasses and was eventually taken to the All-India Medical Institute. The police, the said, told him, "Don't say the PAC shot at you or they will kill you in the hospital."

He told me police the have tried to arrest him twice since the incident. He says he still fears for his life. "This riots might break again at any time," he said. "Riots come to us again and again."

No Prevention

Meerut cannot be forgotten for this reason: nothing has been done to prevent a recurrence. Both communities are guilty, both communities are angry, both communities are victims. The fact that both communities are almost equal in population (Muslims 45% Hindu 55%) has been cited as a reason for continuing unrest in the Uttar Pradesh City, only an hour's run from Delhi.

This year, it was a black Diwali at the house of Meerut Professor Dr. Harpal Singh. On May 19 his son, a medical doctor, was burned alive in his car by mobs in front of the mosque. It was the first night of intensive rioting and the young doctor was on his way to a nursing home to perform an operation.

Dr. Prabhat Singh, 32, left behind a wife who is also a doctor and two small children aged three and one. "I only saw the vehicle," Dr Harpal Singh remembers. "I saw his bones

inside his car. In such an atmosphere, no one would come forward and tell me anything. I brought part of his pelvic bone back to the house."

An hour later he was standing at his front gate pleading with Hindu mobs who wanted to take revenge for the killing by burning nearby Muslims shops. "I told them not to do it," Harpal said. "They just wanted to taken my son's name and use it for revenge. They were bent on than-Prabhat or no Prabhat."

Harpal Singh, 58, is head of the department of political science at Nanak Chandh College. He has worked for anti-communal organistaions since before 1970 and was busy addressing invitation to a seminar he had organized on "Communal Harmony" when I arrived at his home.

He and his wife do not blame the other community for the death of their son. "My own community was doing the same thing," he said.

Who is Responsible

Who does he blame? He said he holds the administration responsible. "No one asks them why this has happened in our town. They are not held responsible. What were they doing? This was the most significant death in this town and no person will be held accountable. The real criminal gets political support," he told me. Dr. Singh shakes his head when he remembers the chaos that shook the city. "This is how weak administration, lack of political will and criminals create a situation where honest, meaningful citizens become helpless to do anything."

"Unless the government is bent upon finding a solution it will be difficult for the people alone to check riots," he said. He says he has never been more committed to his anti-communal work. "There is no other way. A secular, democratic India is the only way out."

A few miles away, inside the walled city, Meerut native Abdul Halim, a former MP and minister during the Janata regime, laments the confused and leaderless state of the Muslim community. "Muslim leadership has totally failed," he says, and the community "has no plan at all. Some ae simply leaving."

He recalls partition: "In 1947,

I didn't see such a particular division on communal lines as I see in this city in 1987. Today, the division between communities is total."

He says young people are most vulnerable to being swept along on a tide of militancy. "The older generation always had the feeling that we'll find justice through the administration. The new generation feels that they must defend themselves. They feel that we (the older generation) were wrong-and events have proven that we were wrong."

A group of young people cluster at the door and peer in at us. "All this fuels the feeling of revenge," Halim says, "And that is uncontrollable. I am afraid of it."

Before I left Meerut, I called on the District Magistrate, Mr. George Joseph, who arrived in Meerut to take up his post at the height of the riots. He said communal passions have calmed down considerably. "It cannot disappear absolutely but we can live with it," he said.

I asked him what steps were being taken to prevent sidespread communal violence from recurring. "In my personal opinion," he said, "the best thing we can do is forget about the whole thing. Forcing the two communities to be friendly will only remind them of the division. On the surface people say wee should have committee and we should meet each other, but I don't think it works. You see, the best policy to encourage communal harmony if you just don't talk about communal harmony."

I pointed out that in the May riots, according to local people I had met, the administration had been weak, and police activity had ranged from helplessness to—I had been told communal brutality.

Mr. Joseph defended the administration's general policy on non-involvement. I asked about the dangerous, persistent tension that led up to the riots. "When tensions build up," he said, "we acknowledge it. When it goes beyond a certain level we have to fight it. No other thing will work. But when things come back to normal, we just forget about it. That is our plan of action."

With such a plan of action, the young victim in Hashimpura, Qusman, may be right: tragedies like the Meerut riots will "come to us again and again."



Badiuzzaman

The Fourth Brahmin

Yes, sir, I too have been seeing you here regularly. Perhaps you too like this corner of Ramble as I do. You are perfectly right in remarking that in this corner one feels solitude even amongst a big crowd. But is it not applicable to the present day man as well? I get your point—by solitude you mean the peace of mind a man gets when he is all alone, although this is also a matter to be considered whether man gets peace of mind at all. In a crowd one's mind remains frozen like a block of ice, inert and inactive. You have diverted the issue to psychology. Yes, sir, I too believe that man's mind always remains active at the subconscious level. But I was not talking of the labyrinths of the sub-consciousness. I was referring to the thought process which remains active on the conscious plane and which man remains fully aware of. Yes sir, you cannot get a complete picture of Indian culture and conduct in Delhi. You cannot get it at any other single place in India either. Basic principles of Indian culture? Sorry, I would not be able to dilate upon it. You appear to be keenly interested in this subject. I can only say that our culture is pretty old. It has innumerable aspects—many of them appear to be contradictory to each other. But all these aspects present the picture of unity in diversity. Didn't guess alright? The oblique smile on your face undeniably supports my guess. Yes, sir, you must have heard about this in your own country, even before landing in India. For us to hear such talk is almost a daily affair. Does it not stand witness to the fact that the present day world has shrunk in size? I am not a philosopher, nor a thinker. I have never thought it necessary to brood over the enigma of human existence and the intricacies of man's life. But in my humble opinion the shrinking of the world in this manner has not been good for man because curiosity, the source of interest in life, is now receding into the background. For example, I would daily see you sitting opposite me and my curiosity aroused the desire to know you better. But now after having known you the curiosity and the desire are dead. I beg your pardon, but in my opinion curiosity and desire make life worth living—they lend a certain charm to life. Yes, sir, your statement is also correct. God knows how mysteries remain unresolved even today. We have yet to discover many things pertaining to life and nature. As for example let us take this present meeting of ours. Whatever we have been able to gather about each other represents not even a drop in the ocean. You seem to be observing my legs. You must be wondering why they are fidgety. It is a source no less of wonder than worry for me—uncultured boorish, of churlish! God knows which epithet hovers over the horizon of your imagination, when you cast a

look at me. But I am helpless. It has become a second nature with me, something which I developed in my childhood. As we grow our childhood habits are left behind, but some of them stick to us with such tenacity that the best of culture cannot erase them. Probably fidgeting is such a habit with me. I tried hard to wean myself away from it. I had to undergo for it severe punishment as a child. Father would scold me for it, teach or would exercise the rod, and the result—even today I am having this fault of fidgeting. Yes, sir, you are right. Our system of education is defective. It aims at hewing angels out of us with the help of a rod whereas the basic fact remains that the human animal cannot be beaten into angelhood. But owing to its stupidity, the system turns us into devils. You like my views—thanks. Though I seldom talk anything of interest. I usually indulge in fruitful talks and a fruitful talk is hardly of any interest. Eh! you want to know something about my personal life! I must oblige, even though I know that in your part of the land, it is rather ill-mannered to ask personal questions. But we here hold the opposite view. We Indians are known for spontaneous and informal behaviour. How long it is since you are in India? Two months? Though it is not a long period, you must have come to know that just as we Indians do not hesitate to talk about ourselves even to strangers, we take it for our birthright to probe into others' personal lives. Do you like this behaviour of ours? Is it really that you like our behaviour or you have endorsed my views as a mark of courtesy? So far as I am concerned, I don't consider it proper though I am myself not above it. Why should we be interested in the personal lives of others? No, sir, I don't belong to a well-to-do family. Whatever little I have been able to accumulate is the result of my own efforts. I inherited nothing. Yes, sir, you are right. I am literally a "selfmade" man. But

let us wait. Is "selfmade" the proper term? Can anyone be "selfmade"? When I cast a glance at my past it appears rather ridiculous to say that I am selfmade. It is true not only in respect of me, but also in respect of our whole category of so called selfmade men. I beg your pardon, probably my views do not tally with those of yours on this topic. You may take it ill. I don't mean to touch any sentiments—if you too belong to the same category. Please repeat what you have said. "Everyone of the Americans is a selfmade man," is that what you said? Everyone in America has the right to develop himself to his maximum potentialities. Yes, sir, I know the circumstances there are such. The same is true to a lesser degree in our land. But the point I wanted to put forward was that in reaching the summit of success it is not only one's efforts that count but also the sympathies and help that he secures from his well-wishers and friends. I am talking about the common man and not about a genius, as I take the latter for no less than a madman. I hold that the genius and the madman—both go it alone. They don't need a prop to stand. And then they are indifferent towards achieving the summit of success. I am talking of those ordinary men who are considered big in the society. Let it be my wrong notion, but I consider myself also as one amongst them. You might observe some inconsistency in my talk. You may be right. I am not adept in oratory. My friends tell me that I am one hundred per cent the man of deeds. No, sir, I don't belong to Delhi. Yes, sir, I am here since long. The fact is that only a few amongst the residents of Delhi originally belong to this city. It is a place for the displaced. Yes sir, I allude to the displaced from Pakistan. But I also include those who have not been uprooted from a place now foreign to India but have migrated from places within Indian territory. Yes, sir, many who originally belong to Delhi,

left for Pakistan leaving their culture behind. Similarly, millions of the people from Pakistan came down to Delhi leaving their culture behind. I beg your pardon. Please repeat. Do you say the refugees must have taken their culture along with them?

You may be right. I have already said that I am not interested in the subject pertaining to culture or civilization. I have held the view that culture is like a tree, which once rooted out, cannot be planted at any other place.

I was just now talking about those who have not migrated from a foreign land. They have come here from one or the other part of the motherland. They too consider themselves as displaced persons. How strange but true it is that the citizens of our country consider themselves almost aliens—and displaced. Does the same situation prevail in your land as well? I too was of the same opinion. All the big cities of the world are fundamentally in no way different from one another. Take for example my own case. When I resided in a small town I would think as if there were a treasure-trove for me in big cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. But now having resided in these cities, I find there is nothing particularly fascinating for me. It reminds me of the state of my own mind when I observe people fondly talking of New York, London and Paris. Yes, sir, there was a time when I too would look upon these cities as the centres of my hopes and aspirations. But now, perhaps, I have realised the truth about them. Perhaps, that is why no ambition to visit London or Paris stirs my frame. I prevail upon myself to believe that in comparison with other big cities, there would be a larger number of people and more skyscrapers in cities like London, New York and Paris—and proportionately more tedium and horror. But don't you think that I have taken a vow never to visit a big city in the world. No sir, I have not

taken a vow like that. I want to rise in life and in the voyage of that life if I happen to see a light house in any of these cities I would not hesitate to visit it. You may be disappointed to hear me talk in such a manner—talk from my tongue as you may not have imagined that an Indian could also talk in that strain. What rosy ideas must have brought you here to our land! What attraction do you find in our civilization and culture that you have travelled a distance of thousands of miles? And look at my conduct—with a single attack I appear to be destroying the palace whose majesty impelled you to leave your place for a far off land. But I don't mean it to that extent. I wanted only to point out that the majesty of our civilization and culture can never have such attraction, on the contrary we Indians feel attracted towards your civilization and culture. Perhaps you are right, too. Our reason for it is that we Indians have only recently freed ourselves from foreign bondage that held us in thralldom for long centuries. Are we free even now? No, only a blockhead would say that we are free from the curse of poverty! It is a wastage of time to dilate upon the miseries brought about by poverty. You know all the facts. Even then if you want to survey our topography, our poverty, with your own eyes, visit any Indian village. You must be wondering how all at once my tone has become pungent. I look well-to-do in your eyes. But this represents my present. The time through which I have passed has left its scars even on my present. The fire that has scalded me in the past will leave its marks even on my future. Yes sir, I have sipped the hemlock of poverty. Its bitter taste permeates through every part of my tongue. Even today we warp over the hopes that have been smashed to bits and the dreams that have died without being realised. They are the cancer of our soul. This cancer working in harmony with our miserable plight slowly but steadily pushes us into the burning fires of hell.

Let me tell you about an incident from my own life, an incident which occurred many years back. I was a child then. I must have been five or six years of age. The village fell prey to a terrible draught. My father owned a small piece of land. With hard work he would make the land yield sufficient to sustain the family. But how could a parched land yield a crop? Throughout the day, like a terrible ruler the sun would wrathfully incise the earth with fiery shafts. There was no mark of clouds far and near. People were looking towards the sky with petrified eyes. One should not wonder if the people in India are fatalists. They imbibed this philosophy from the sky and the earth. When people are dying of draught and starvation, and not a single drop of water is yielded by the sky, what else can they anchor upon than having



recourse to fatalism? For many days we fed ourselves on leaves and foliage of the trees. But when they were also not available, and all the wells and tanks of the village dried up, the inhabitants of the village were left with no other alternative but to leave the village. But this too was not an easy path to adopt. The people were so much emaciated by taking animal fodder that they could hardly move a step. My mother was seriously ill. Starvation conjoined with illness had rendered her condition precarious. My father was left with only two alternatives—either to stay back in the village to take care of Mother and allow himself as well as me to be claimed by death or to leave Mother to her own fate and escape from there in hope of survival. I am obsessed with the smog like memory of that terrible time. And, piercing through that smog a pair of bewildered eyes flash across my mind. Perhaps you could guess whose eyes were these. Yes, sir, these were the eyes of my mother. You will feel surprised that while thinking of my mother I cannot visualise any other part of her body except her eyes. They contained all the human sentiments. They expressed love as well as hatred, helplessness as well as a peculiar strength that is the result of the proper understanding of human relations. There was reproach as well as appreciation. There was condemnation for selfishness and meanness and also a sympathetic gesture to understand it in its proper perspective. They reflected pangs of hunger as well as contentment resulting from courting death. It is very hard to express in words what these eyes revealed to the onlooker. Words have their limitation. They almost half conceal and half reveal the reality. Yes, sir, our country quite often falls prey to draught and famine. The times that I am talking of were simply terrible. In those days we could not import wheat from your country. Britain presided over our destiny and they were indifferent to our well-being. Yes, sir. That's why we now blindly follow your great traditions in dress, in art, in literature and in thought. We are not an ungrateful nation. We never forget those who help us. Let me, however, not lose the trend and go astray. I was telling you about an incident in my life, even though I know not how far it is correct to call it an incident. When leaving my mother on her cot we slipped out of the house we observed our village dead and desolate. When we heavily trudged our way to the road, we saw an army of crawling men. Countless men, women and children were lying on the ground, suffering the pangs of starvation. Many of them had by, slow degrees reached the verge of death. Could you ever imagine that the man sitting opposite you has also passed through such ghastly scenes? That's why I say that we can only roundly make a guess about someone; we cannot say anything for certain. No, sir, even my father could not escape death. The life to save which he readily threw

my mother into the jaws of death did not remain faithful to him. Yes, sir, I don't consider my father a cruel man. Whatever he had decided was dictated to him by his sense of discrimination about right and wrong. We men suffer from a fault in that we judge others from our own point of view. You may imagine that since I have myself experienced poverty and hunger, therefore I sympathise with the poor and hungry. But I have not experienced any such transformation. It is a hard reality that one particular incident bring about different reactions in different minds. History is replete with lives of such administrators who had experienced poverty to the extreme but when they themselves became powerful they crushed the poor and brought untold misery on them. You must have read about the Buddha. He was brought up in the lap of luxury and still when he observed his fellowmen in the grip of misery, his sensitive mind could not stand it. He left the world and roamed about in jungles in search of salvation. I have again dilated. The bitter droughts of poverty and economic instability made me take interest in collecting money. This interest was not generated by poverty alone, because the days of starvation for me had long passed, never to return. This interest ultimately made me live in affluent circumstances—the circumstances where there was no hunger or poverty but where my ego was often hurt. When my father died, leaving me behind on the roadside, I was left with nothing to fall back upon. I could not decide what to do. I was merely a lad of 5-6 years and the faculty of taking decisions had not developed in me. You may be surprised to know that not a single drop of tear rolled down my eyes at the death of my father. Tenderness of heart is associated with those who have enjoyed the luxuries of life. I remember only this much that the body of my father was lying lifeless when a crowd of men—hungry and half naked passed by unconcerned. After that it appears as though I had lost all consciousness. When I regained it, the scene of life had changed altogether. I was lying on a soft sofa and the aged hand of an old man was patting my head. Believe me, the sense of satisfaction, relief and happiness that was imparted to me by that aged hand was never afforded to me by my own father. That's why I say that all human relationship is measured by the yardstick of happiness and relief that one gives to the other. In other words we value a relationship only till it is useful for us. The old man who at that time proved himself no less than a liberator for me was a very rich man. He had only one daughter who was much senior to me in age. She was a very naughty and playful girl. Probably the fact that there was no male child in that affluent family was instrumental in my being brought there. I got all sorts of comfort there. The food that I ate, the clothes that I wore, could not have been imagined even in my dream. But you know man is never satisfied with his environments. This

naughty girl who was just like an elder sister to me in my new surrounding proved herself to be a nuisance for me. Having suffered the pangs of hunger for such a long time, I had developed a mania. I would eat so much that the members of the household thought that my quota of eatables equalled that of all the rest. I was experiencing a strange feeling in that having taken all I could, having had more than my fill, I would not feel the pleasure of satiety. I remained subject to this mania for weeks. Then by slow degrees its hold upon my mind weakened, but did not go altogether. Whenever I would see something eatable, I would be seized with a desire to eat and my eyes would exhibit the flash that comes in the eyes of a beggar who has remained hungry for quite a long time. I would try hard to control myself, but would invariably fail. My guardian who was as good as my father would not like that habit of mine. He tried to wean me away from it first through love and advice, and then through scolding and reproach. Likewise he never liked my fidgety feet. He would often lose temper when he would observe my feet shaking. Both these habits had taken hold of me in a way that I could not leave them. The terribly naughty girl would tease me to her maximum. She would often mock at me. Gradually the idea took root that I was nothing more than a clown in that house. This idea brought forth a longing that I should see myself out of that place as soon as possible. A hungry man needs only food, but once he is well fed he thinks of his self respect and dignity. Even though I find it hard to believe that there exists a man who had never been subjected to disrespectful and derogatory treatment by others, I cannot say the same with certainty about absolute monarchs and autocrats. Possibly there may be some amongst them who had not to undergo derogatory treatment from others. But we remain so much in the dark about the lives of these men that we cannot say anything with certainty about their lives. You must have read the autobiography of Svetlana. Whatever Khrushchev did to demolish the image of Stalin must have its reasons in the derogatory treatment that Khrushchev had to undergo at the hands of Stalin. God knows how many great men in history owe their greatness to the feeling given to them by the derogatory treatment which they underwent at the hands of others. Something sinister happened to me as well. The feeling of being subjected to insult which had been smouldering within me burst out into a flame of fire at another similar incident. It had been more than three years that I stayed in that house. My guardian had invited some of his friends to a dinner. All of us had taken our respective seats at the table. I had by then become familiar with the table manners in a cultured society. My behaviour could not betray that I was in reality not a member of that family. On that occasion when everyone was sitting at the table, the terribly naughty girl all at once became

aware of my fidgety feet. It was not a new thing for her but God knows why she fell into a fit of laughter at that time. In a voice choked with laughter she invited her father to enjoy the scene presented by my fidgety feet. At that moment an invitee was telling a titbit about Birbal and Akbar with some relish and everyone was listening to him with rapt attention. Now no one listened to the titbit. Everyone was observing my fidgety feet. The room was full of the vibrations created by the laughter of all present there. My guardian lost his temper, I had never before witnessed him so helplessly in the grip of anger. In a voice full with resonance and anger he ordered me to leave the table. It was the first time that I was so miserably insulted in the presence of strangers at the house. Till late in the night I restlessly tossed in my bed. When everyone else fell fast asleep and pindrop silence reigned the atmosphere, I silently got upon my feet and came out of the house. I cast the parting glance at the house that was there drowned in an ocean of darkness, swore never to return and left it for ever. I lived to my word. It is about three years now but I have not even once thought of going back. You may say that the house gave me shelter in the leanest hours of my life and my behaviour and resolve amounts to ungratefulness to the guardian but I don't subscribe to the view. To me it appears that gratitude and ingratitude, both are the signs of an artificial nature in man. I don't count them among the rational reactions of man. I think that whenever any one does something good to you, in his subconscious mind he has some thirst to satisfy. Therefore, it is not the man to whom a good is done but the thirst for nobility in the deed that impels him to do something good. Viewed in that light ingratitude also pales away into insignificance. Having crossed such a length of time, now when I look behind, I am seized with the desire—would my guardian had not cared so much for me! Would he had looked upon me as his personal servant! How happy I would have felt then! In that case I would not have been subjected to the open insult on that occasion. I rightly believe that the slaves in the mediaeval times felt more happy and contented than the present day poor man, because they realised that good or bad, whatever life they had been condemned to live was destined for them by Almighty and they also realised that fate cannot be altered. But whatever facility my guardian promised me, made me look for more and still more, which in time sharpened my sensibilities to the extent that I felt touched to the quick when I was unceremoniously ordered to leave the company. It is not that after that incident I had never to face insult. Often I had to drink the hemlock in a greater measure. Man has always remained in the grip of his desire to gather wealth and honour more and more. One can only try to know oneself but it is difficult for him to judge how far he has succeeded in his effort. Looking at my part, I come to the conclusion that

poverty and hunger, which I had remained subjected to, impelled me to grow rich—richer with every passing day. You know better as to how wealth brings in honour in its train. Yes, sir, it is a weakness to run after money—a weakness which develops into a mania, but once a mania catches hold of your mind, it holds you in thrall and you become helpless. The tragedy of my life lies in the fact that I am quite aware of the mania which has caught hold of me, but I cannot cast off its shackles and become free. Perhaps it is not only with me but with everyone of us today. Yes, sir, viewed from this angle, the man of today is different from the man who is mad. The mad man is not aware of his malady and ailment. Once he becomes aware of it, he is no longer a mad man. I know there is no end to the desire of growing rich and richer but like the fourth Brahmin in the *Panchtantra*, leaving behind the mines of copper, silver and gold, we remain marching forward in search of diamond mines—and everyone of us has a wheel in perpetual motion in his brain.

I beg your pardon, please repeat your words. You have never heard of *Panchtantra*? Please do get a copy of the book. In it you will get a good glimpse of your civilization and society. Yes, sir, the story that I am referring to is entitled "The Story of the Fourth Brahmin"—you must be knowing that the desire to grow richer has ever remained with man. Yes, sir, this desire remained even in this country of ours, the country where spiritualism has always been considered superior to materialism, where everything is taken for Maya—an illusion. In my view, however, we in India have marched far ahead of the time as told of in the *Panchtantra*. In those times the three Brahmins had become satisfied with their respective finds of copper, silver and gold mines. But now everyone of us has lost his soul in the mirage of getting riches. Like the fourth Brahmin, everyone of us has a wheel in motion in his brain. Yes, sir, the tales of *Panchtantra* are symbolic and carry the same meaning even today. I am sorry, I wasted much of your time and then I gave out nothing in parlance to you. You must be thinking what a rambler you came across. You are right—God knows what I had been speaking—a talk without purpose—with a meaningless beginning and end. And still I hold that the civilization and culture of a country can better be known from its literature. Man is the same everywhere but he does appear different in the literatures of different countries. Well, let me now beg leave of you. It is past 9.30 Good night.



Accommodating Human Needs and Numbers to the Earth's Resources

The global population, in which the present generation of about six billion live today, may become unsustainable and a great majority of countries may face ecological, economic and political stresses that may well prove unmanageable. United Nations projections show world population increasing from 4 billion to 10 to 12 billion before eventually levelling off. From a purely demographic point of view, these projections look quite sound but when viewed, in the large picture of ecological stresses, technologies, and social structures, they do not hold up. Signs of stress on the world's principal biological stems and energy resources indicate that in many places they have already reached the breaking point. Expecting them to withstand a tripling or quadrupling of population pressures in simply expecting too much.

Biological Systems

The earth's primary biological systems—oceanic fisheries, grasslands, forests and croplands—are being stretched to their limits as population increases. The oceanic food chain, yielding some 70 million tons of fish per year is humanity's principal source of high quality protein. Not only do fisheries provide animal protein for direct consumption but the less palatable species are converted into fish meal and fed to poultry that produce meat and eggs. Fisheries also yield fish and other byproducts.

Forests provide lumber, still a universal building material and firewood as well for fully a third of humanity. They are the source of the newsprint for the daily newspaper and of paper, the basic raw material used by the world's burgeoning white collar labour force. In short, the housing, education, and communication sectors depend heavily on forests for raw materials.

The earth's grasslands are a rich source of protein, supplying most of the world's meat, milk, butter and cheese. In addition, they sustain the draft animals that till a third of the world's croplands. Grasslands support the animals which are the source of leather for footwear and other goods and of wool, one of the oldest and most highly prized fibers.

Croplands produce an even greater variety of products—food, fiber, and industrial raw materials such as rubber, alcohol, and vegetable oils. Their contribution to the global economy is far in excess of the one-tenth of the earth's land surface that they occupy.

As population expands so does the demand for food and consequently, the demand for cropland. But population growth simultaneously contributes to demands for land for

other purposes: for example, residential construction, transport systems, and recreational areas.

Socio-economic Stresses.

The adjustments required to preserve the biological underpinnings of the global economy are intrinsically profound; they will challenge fully both human ingenuity and the human capacity for behavioral change. Unfortunately a second equally momentous change—namely, the shift from non-renewable to renewable energy sources will compound the difficulties of making the first. It has long been known that world oil production would eventually turn downward, as it already has in the United States, but until recently few cared because it was assumed the future economy would be powered largely by inexpensive nuclear power. But the nuclear dream fades with each passing day.

World oil production is projected to peak sometimes during the early 1990s. With the downturn in oil production ahead of us and the nuclear dream paling, we must redesign the economic system for a post-petroleum, non-nuclear world. At present there is little public understanding of the effects of the shift from oil to solar energy on economic and social structures.

Population growth fans inflation by creating resource scarcities. It raises unemployment by increasing the number of job seekers faster than jobs are created. Where it outstrips economic growth, it pushes down standards of living. Thus in poor countries where population growth rates are high, more of the available capital must be spent on food and shelter, leaving less for health care, education and culture. Population growth not only multiplies the number of people who desire and need these social essentials, but it also reduces the resources available to satisfy them.

All signs show that in the past few years the world entered a new era. During the quarter century following World War II, the global output of goods and services nearly tripled. Patently unsustainable, this explosive growth in output has no historical precedent. Never before have energy and food supplies been cheap and abundant enough to permit such rapid economic and population growth. Nor is it likely they will ever be again.

Population growth has always contributed to a growth in demand for resources but it is now beginning to reduce the productive capacity of some local biological systems by consuming the very bases of these systems. As awareness of this new reality permeates

public consciousness, it lends new urgency to the need to stabilize population.

Before agriculture developed, population growth was imperceptibly slow. After agriculture was developed, increase in the food supply led to substantial population increases. As population pressures mounted, so did the impetus for the agricultural innovation. Such developments permitted further increases in population, setting in motion a self-reinforcing cycle that has continued until the present.

Compared with the 2 to 5 percent increase in population experienced during each of the 15 centuries of the Christian era, the rate of population growth in some countries today is between 3 and 4 percent per year. Thus the time needed to add a billion people to the earth's population is now incredibly short. If the present growth rate were to be maintained until this time next century, only a year would be needed to add 1 billion and a mere 4 years to add the present world population.

Ecological Stresses.

The concept of the carrying capacity of a biological system i.e., its ability to produce and regenerate, is central to an analysis of the ecological stresses, which threaten communities throughout the world. A natural grassland can support a given number of cattle or a somewhat larger number of sheep, a fishery will supply the protein needs of a certain number of people, and the forest surrounding a village will satisfy the firewood needs of a given population. If these biological systems are damaged or destroyed by over exploitation, the number of persons the earth can ultimately "carry" will decline sharply.

Of the earth's four biological systems, croplands have the greatest potential for future growth in productivity. However the other three biological systems that remain essentially in their natural state are being adversely affected in many situations by the pressures of excessive demand. In place after place, the off take of fish, wood or grass outstrips the regenerative capacity of fishery, forest or grassland. Accordingly, the systems deteriorates and its carrying capacity shrinks.

...Air Pollution From Auto Exhaust Emissions

The Chief Executive Councillor, Shri Jag Pravech Chandra on 11th Dec. inaugurated a year-long campaign to create awareness among the people about the alarming level of air pollution being caused due to auto exhaust emissions in the Capital.

He also launched a new public service venture, under which free checking of cars for measuring the carbon monoxide percentage in their exhaust will be carried out, to begin with at 12 Petrol Stations simultaneously in different parts of Delhi.

Shri Chandra, along with the Press representatives, saw the actual functioning of the service at one such centre. Here trained staff of the Directorate of Transport, specially recruited for the purpose, checked the exhaust of cars for the percentage of carbon monoxide emitted by them with the help of latest Exhaust Gas Analysers.

Later addressing a Press Conference, Shri Chandra said—Automobile exhaust emission accounts for around 50 per cent of the total air pollution in Delhi. This is because there are today more than 12 lakh automobiles on Delhi roads and around 1 lakh more are being added every year. Amongst the various toxic pollutants, emitted with the exhaust of petrol driven automobiles, Carbonmonoxide gas is the most harmful. A disconcerting feature of it is that it remains in the atmosphere much longer than other gaseous pollutants before getting oxidised.

In this context he informed that 90% of the total Carbonmonoxide pollution in the capital came from the exhausts of the automobiles that criss-cross the roads of the Capital. Calling this exhaust, carbonmonoxide as the "Killer in the Air", Shri Chandra explained how this gas acts to damage body cells thus: "The normal function of haemoglobin in human blood is to pick up Oxygen from the air inhaled and supply it to all the body parts. But unfortunately, the affinity of haemoglobin for Carbon-monoxide is 200 times more than its affinity for Oxygen. Hence, when Carbonmonoxide is present in the air, haemoglobin molecules pick up more Carbonmonoxide, instead of picking up Oxygen".

Consequently, instead of Oxygen, more Carbonmonoxide begins to circulate in the body. This causes Oxygen starvation of the tissues, resulting in headache, dizziness and lassitude. It can also lead to carboxyl poisoning.

Speaking of the strategy to be adopted to "Kill the Killer" Shri Chandra said—Carbonmono-

xide emission from cars is mainly due to the improper air petrol ratio supplied by the carburettor. Correct air petrol ratio is supplied when the carburettor is properly tuned. This not only reduces pollution but also saves petrol.

It is under this backdrop that the Delhi Administration has launched this unique public service venture, which is the first of its kind in the country, from today, with the collaboration of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPC), Indo Burma Petroleum Company (IBP), Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPC) and Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) and with the technical back up of Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IITD).

The service, which is free, he said, will be available, to begin with, at the 12 petrol stations spread all over Delhi from 9.30 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. on all days (except Mondays and Tuesdays).

This facility will gradually be made available at more locations, Shri Chandra announced.

The Motorists, Shri Chandra said, will be free to drive in any of these petrol pumps where experts of the Directorate of Transport, will check the percentage of Carbonmonoxide emitted by the cars using the latest Exhaust Gas Analysers. The result will be indicated on a card which will be given to the motorists. Then he could drive to the service station of his choice to get the carburettor tuned accordingly.

He said by minimising Carbonmonoxide emission the motorists not only safeguard their own health but that of others also. They also get better mileage and thus save money every day.

Speaking of the educative campaign in the first phase of combating the menace of air pollution due to auto-exhaust, the CEC said that the Administration was launching massive public awareness drive/through various media of publicity e.g. Radio, T.V., Press, Film Shows, Slide shows in Cinema Houses, hoardings, banners etc.

It is note worthy he said that vehicles which cause excessive pollution are also amongst those which give the least mileage per litre of petrol. It means less mileage, more pollution and greater wastage of money. Therefore, it is in the vehicle owner's interest to rectify periodically the mechanical defects of their vehicles so that they get better mileage figures and reduced carbon monoxide emissions, Shri Chandra emphasised. ●

संचेतना

किसी भी शुभ अवसर पर
अपने प्रियजनों को

**'संचेतना'
उपहार में दीजिए।**

Amnesty Reports Violation of Human Rights

Amnesty International in its report for 1986 reports the following glaring violation of Human Rights by the government in India.

Amnesty International was concerned about the detention of hundreds of political detainees held without charge or trial under special "anti-terrorist" legislation or preventive detention laws. The organization was concerned that these laws lacked legal safeguards required by international human rights standards and that they allowed people to be detained for non-violently expressing their opinions. There were allegations from most Indian states of ill-treatment and torture of detainees and some detainees allegedly died as a result. Amnesty International was concerned that some alleged supporters of armed opposition groups were deliberately killed in "encounters" staged by the police, and that landless peasants were extrajudicially killed by police. The organization was also concerned about several executions.

Acts of political violence were reported from various states, including the Punjab, West Bengal, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh. Armed groups in the Punjab demanding a separate Sikh state killed police, local officials and civilians. Reuters reported on 20 September that 480 political killings had taken place in the state between January and September. In West Bengal, supporters of the Gorkha National Liberation Front staged a violent campaign for a separate state, while in Andhra Pradesh some left-wing political groups advocating social and economic reform adopted violent methods.

Politically motivated arrests were reported from many Indian states. A number of those arrested were held in preventive detention under the National Security Act (NSA) which permits detainees to be held without charge or trial for up to one year (in the Punjab, two years). These periods of detention could be renewed indefinitely. Others were arrested under the 1985 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act. Amnesty International believed that the Act's provisions were so broad that people could be detained for non-violently expressing their political opinions (see *Amnesty International Report 1986*). Among the several hundred people reportedly arrested under the Act during 1986 were several whom Amnesty International considered prisoners of conscience. On 12 August the editor of the fortnightly publication, *Dalit Voice*, was arrested for publishing an article which the government alleged was seditious. He was released one week later without having been charged. The editor and printer of an Urdu weekly, *Nai Duniya*, were arrested under the Act on 5 November and detained for 15 days for publishing, a year

earlier, an interview with an expatriate Sikh leader advocating a separate Sikh state. Another prisoner of conscience was a Sikkimese Buddhist and former leader of the Naya Sikkim Party, Captain Sonam Yongda, who was arrested on 6 January under the NSA for making a series of speeches, more than a year before his arrest, in which he allegedly criticized the incorporation of Sikkim into India and called on the Sikkimese to re-establish their lost rights. He was held without charge or trial and was reportedly suffering from recurring paralysis of the left side of the body.

In November Amnesty International wrote to the authorities about the continued detention, apparently under the NSA of 379 Sikh detainees held in Jodhpur Jail, Rajasthan. They were among some 1,500 people arrested when the Indian army attacked and entered the Golden Temple, Amritsar, in June 1984. Amnesty International expressed concern that the detainees had apparently been held beyond the two-year legal maximum and that there could be some among them who had been arrested simply for having been present in the Golden Temple. Amnesty International also stated that if these detainees were tried under the Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Act, they might not be given a fair trial since the Act permitted procedures incompatible with Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a party. The Act permitted special courts to try people on charges of "waging war". It was mandatory for special courts to sit in camera, courts could sit in jails and the identity of witnesses could be kept secret. The burden of proof was transferred from the prosecution to the defence, if the accused was in an area where firearms or explosives were used, or where the security forces were attacked or resisted. Appeals could be lodged only within 30 days of sentence. A special court was established in Jodhpur Jail which by August had, according to one report, started proceedings against these detainees, although no details had emerged by the end of 1986. All the detainees were reportedly charged with identical offences on the basis of cyclostyled "confessions" that they were members of the All India Sikh Students Federation or the *Dal Khalsa* (an outlawed Sikh organization). Sixty of the detainees in Jodhpur had been held in 1984 in Latha Kothi Jail, Sangrur, Punjab, together with 30 others. An official commission established by the Punjab state government submitted a report in May which found evidence that the 90 detainees arrested at the Golden Temple in June 1984 had been tortured. The commission recommended compensation for the 90 detainees and disciplinary action against 22 police officers

reportedly involved. Amnesty International was investigating the cases of the 397 Sikh detainees in Jodhpur, urging the government either to release them or to give them a fair trial under ordinary procedures of criminal law.

In December Amnesty International urged the release or fair trial without delay of Prakash Singh Badal, leader of the breakaway *Akali Dal* faction formed in May 1986. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the newly elected President of the *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee* (SGPC), Temple Management Committee, and an estimated 200 members of the *Akali Dal* (Badal) faction and the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF). They were arrested and held without charge or trial under the provision of the NSA in early December after 22 bus passengers, mostly Hindus, were killed in Hoshiarpur on 30 November 1986 an incident for which the Khalistan Liberation Force (the armed wing of the AISSF) had claimed responsibility. Subsequently parts of Punjab were declared "disturbed areas" and the state governor asked the army to assist the police and paramilitary forces. The new Director General of Police of the Punjab, appointed in March 1986, announced new police and paramilitary operations aimed at the elimination or arrest of leaders and member of armed Sikh groups. Amnesty International received an increasing number of reports that some killing of Sikh activists in the state were the result of "fake encounters" staged by the police or paramilitary forces. According to these reports, the victims were deliberately killed, some after capture. Amnesty International was not able to investigate these reports but an official four-member committee, headed by a former judge, studied 35 "encounters" in the state and reported in February that almost all such cases in the Punjab were "fake encounters". On 25 June a magisterial inquiry found that the Border Security Force had been guilty of deliberate killings and recommended that charges of murder be brought against those responsible, but few inquiries into alleged extrajudicial killings were held. Extrajudicial killings were also reported from other parts of India, including West Bengal.

Of particular concern were reports from the state of Bihar where landless peasants increasingly opposed illegal land occupation or appropriation by local landowners. Left-wing political groups, some advocating peaceful change, as well as "Naxalites" (Maoist revolutionaries, some of whom resorted to violence), were also active in the state. Local landowners often employed criminals in private armies and operated in league with local police and politicians. One example of this was an incident in Arwal, Gaya district, where a dispute developed over a plot of government land which had

been used by villagers but which was appropriated by a local landowner. In league with police and local authorities the landowner had peasant huts on the plot demolished. On 19 April police surrounded the Gandhi Library where a protest meeting organized by the left-wing group *Mazdoor Kisan Sangharh Samiti* (MKSS) was attended by over 500 people. Police opened fire and killed 23 men, women and children. The police claimed they fired at MKSS workers trying to attack the nearby police station with lethal weapons, but local witnesses, journalist and representatives of civil liberties bodies found evidence of this. This Gaya District magistrate, visiting the spot one hour later, reportedly described the police firing as "unwarranted, unorganized and uncontrolled". There were widespread demands for a judicial investigation and in August 25,000 people were reportedly arrested to prevent demonstrations before the state assembly. The Bihar Government did not order an independent investigation but asked a member of the Board of Revenue to carry out an official inquiry. On 6 October he was reported to have found that the firing was not "fully justified" and that the police had used "excessive force". The Supreme Court was reported to have ordered the state government to grant compensation to the victims. By the end of 1986 it had not been paid and no action was known to have been taken against those responsible.

Deaths in police custody allegedly as a result of torture or shooting continued to be reported from many Indian states including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Union Territory of Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. In Andhra Pradesh, 11 such deaths were reported in the first nine months of the year, three of them during one week in September alone. In one case, a senior naval officer found seven wounds on the body of one of the victims, T Muralidharan, who the police said had committed suicide in a police station. Amnesty International expressed concern about these deaths but welcomed the state government's decision to hold a judicial inquiry. The outcome of the investigations were not known at the end of 1986. Amnesty International also expressed concern about the deaths of several Sikhs in police custody in New Delhi. Among them was Daljit Singh who died on 24 January in the custody of the New Delhi police. The police stated that he died of high blood pressure, but

Amnesty International received evidence that he died of torture. Suraj Singh died on 13 August in the Gandhi Nagar police station. Eastern Delhi. According to the police he hanged himself in the toilet, but relatives alleged he died of beatings in Shakarpur police station. Amnesty International asked for judicial inquiry in these cases but was unaware of any being instituted. However, in December a magisterial inquiry found that the death of Dayal Singh in a Delhi police station had been the result of torture and recommended that four police officers be charged with murder. In several other such cases police officers were reported to have been charged with murder.

Reports of torture and ill-treatment by the police were received from nearly all Indian states. A number of the victims were members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. For example, tribal leader Shankar Yadu Lokhande died in Narajangaon police station in March, according to the police by hanging, but according to members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. For example, tribal leader Shankar Yadu Lokhande died in Narajangaon police station in March, according to the police by hanging, but according to members of the tribe, because of beatings in police custody. There were also repeated reports that tribal women had been raped by local police. In some cases the Central Bureau of Investigation investigated the allegations and was reported to have established that there was evidence of rape. In October the Supreme Court heard the report of a commission it had established which recorded statements by 584 people about rape by police of tribal women in Gujarat. The commission indicted local police and hospital doctors for covering up evidence of rape. In Jammu and Kashmir political prisoners complained of beatings in various jails, but most reported that torture took place during interrogation in police custody.

In 1986, as in previous years, dozens of people were sentenced to death, mainly for murder. In November the Minister for Home Affairs stated that 35 people had been executed in the three years ending 1985. In April the Indian Supreme Court confirmed a stay of execution for Dayal Singh—who had been arrested in 1965 and sentenced to death for murder in 1978. The Supreme Court confirmed a previous ruling made in 1983 that a person sentenced to death may demand commutation as of right if the sentence has not been carried out within two years.

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Communalism and Human Rights

Continued from page 5

of Hindus, Muslims, tribals and 'untouchables'

Freedom Struggle

Our freedom struggle had several strands in it giving rise to an ambiguous formulation on secularism. One tendency within the Congress sought to push the struggle on the path of Hindu nationalism. Another tendency pursued the path of religious harmony under which all religious groups were called upon to see the common human principles basic to all religions and confidently practice them in their lives. The third trend upheld secularism as a rational, non-religious approach to life which it was stressed would be the ideology of the future. Despite Nehru's commitment to the third approach, the Congress never actually accepted it as its main outlook. A combination of the first two continued to guide the Congress before and after Independence. Gandhi upheld the approach of religious harmony, but was misunderstood by many non-Hindus for his use of Hindu symbols though there is enough evidence, including the fact that he fell to the bullets of a Hindu fanatic, to show that he used the symbols of Hinduism mainly as a mode of mass mobilisation. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Sheikh Abdullah combined the second and third approaches.

The partition produced ambiguous legacies. Even though India did not become a Hindu state, and remained a multireligious society after Pakistan was born, the psychological impact of partition and the communal carnage of 1947 remains serious. Some scholars claim that the partition wrongly delegitimised the existence of the Muslim population in India. In the minds of many non-Muslims, a feeling prevails that Muslims belong to Pakistan. This is a very dangerous feeling because Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, indeed all non-Hindus, have as much stake in India as do the Hindus. But it should be frankly admitted that the images which persist in the minds of many Hindus and the ideas about Muslims with which a Hindu child grows up, howsoever baseless they may be, are a psychological fact. Similar images about Hindus also persist in the minds of Muslims and others.

Partition was the outcome of British colonial policies, the rise of communalism, both Muslim and Hindu, and the impatience of the prevailing Congress leadership to assume power in Independent India—all this was part of the development of the colonial political economy over the years. Fortunately, we are now beginning to see the emergence of new historiography which will perhaps examine the partition on a more objective basis, and with hindsight of the later developments in the Indian

sub-continent, new images of our recent past will emerge.

However, neither the modernization theory, nor the theory of recent Indian history provides an adequate explanation of the rise of the phenomenon of communalism. They do not answer the question as to why some regions where no objective historical reasons for tensions can be traced should now become vulnerable. One has to seek the explanation of this phenomenon in the socio-political character of the overall development process which is of uneven character and which has produced growth with inequities. A centralised state has emerged as the principal actor directing the process of development and, in this process, we find politics becoming increasingly communal, education failing to acquire a secular orientation, and organs of the state apparatus—particularly the bureaucracy, police and the army—fast becoming pockets of communal orientation.

Despite the growth of the Indian economy with remarkable success both in agriculture and industry, the magnitude of poverty, unemployment, inflation and regional disparity remains high. With the mobilization of popular consciousness through political parties, the growth of education and the expansion of the domain of the market, people's demands have steadily risen. Having failed to meet these demands, the Indian state has increasingly resorted to centralisation of power. This trend started in the mid 1970's and gradually we saw what can be called a structural freeze in the Indian system, i.e., the suspension of the programme of structural reforms on various fronts. Particularly under the new administration, we see a greater reliance on a technomanagerial approach to the problems facing our society. The Indian state has become, what can metaphorically be called, a 'silicon state'. At the same time, parties have appealed to religious identities for securing electoral support. The Congress, which had once provided an important instrument of secularization, began to drift into this in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Simultaneously, parties like the B.J.P. which went through a short phase of a secular tilt, have resumed their communal banners. Thus, a trend of communalization of the Indian state process, accompanied by the vastly powerful trend of centralization, is what we have been seeing in recent years. These consequences of the development process essentially amount to attacks on the democratic rights of tribals, peasants, dalits and other minority identity groups.

State in Crisis

The crisis in development manifest in the state-in crisis is therefore the

main cause in the rise of the phenomenon of communalism. This can be illustrated in terms of the cultural policy of the Indian state, particularly its perspective on national integration. Over the years, the official approach to national integration has essentially reflected the ideology of centralisation. The central leadership has defined national integration in terms of cultural, economic and territorial unity and sees very demand for autonomy as a challenge to the unity of India. This has given rise to a "road-roller approach" to culture, where a central leadership identifies what it considers to be national culture. Its talk of composite culture is not a product of negotiation and communication among identities producing a notion of India as a multi-culture civilisation, but a deliberate projection of certain cultural principles in the name of all.

Many liberals had believed that the process of modernisation would be accompanied by new values of enterprise, competition and rationality, which would replace specific cultural identities like religious identities. The socialists believed that in the course of class struggle new values of the working class like those of solidarity, struggle and rationality would be the new motivating principles. History has proved both these assumptions inadequate. All new value have to negotiate with cultural identities and produce a specific mix in each situation.

National integration has become a slogan of the Indian state leadership as part of their power strategy. Elections are won by making emotional appeals of fighting against threats to national unity and integrity. In the process, they have fostered the communalism of the majority Hindu community. The package of national integration thus consists of centralised authority, a roller approach to culture and a Hindu bias. And this package serves the legitimisation purposes of the Indian state. Consequently, we find a sense of alienation among the non-Hindus and the alienation is equally evident among several linguistic, tribal, and regional identity groups in various parts of the country.

Intellectual Failure

It is in this context that we need to see our major intellectual failure in perceiving the nature of secularism. The secularists, both of liberal or socialist variety, had entertained all these years the fond belief that modernisation and class based movements would wipe out the grip of religion over the minds of people. It was believed that religion was, after all, an element of the superstructure—opium of the masses—and with the change of the feudal structures, religion would decline. That religion was a powerful force shaping the worldview of people for centuries and outliving structural changes was not seriously taken into account. The irrational and the divisive

character of religions alone were the subject of concern, not their social base and intellectual and moral functions. It may be noted that both in the Soviet Union and China, recent measures have been taken allowing religious practices for those who believe in religion, while the state clearly encourages a rational, non-religious and secular outlook.

The religious movements have themselves experienced a radical upsurge. The Church groups are active today in Latin American revolutionary struggles. Liberation theology has emerged as a radical ideology. In the history of the Indian freedom struggle, several examples are available from the Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu groups of a patriotic and anti-colonial role. So, the approach to religion needs to be appropriately reconsidered. The secularists or non-believers have to patiently conduct a dialogue with religion rather than dismissing the religious forces merely as obscurantist.

However, we should be clear about the differences between secularism and the new slogan of Indian secularism given by Hindu nationalists. The latter implies a reliance on a framework of multi-religious society where the Hindu religion is the main ethos. This is quite different from what Gandhi visualised for India. Gandhi propounded the notion of equal respect for all religions and equal validity of all religions, without ever suggesting that Indian society was to be governed on the basis of a dominant Hindu ethos.

There is a suprising convergence between the explicit slogan of the Hindu nationalists in their new assertion and the implicit perspective of the Indian state. The leadership of the Indian state does not wish to risk the loss of its Hindu support base. It does not like to see the B.J.P. or some other force carry away this banner and hence this convergence. In this process, secularism has been a casualty—secularism in the sense of a rational and a humanist outlook engaged in dialogue with religion and together forming a part of the struggle for democratic rights. How do we reverse this process?

The Perspective

To start with, let us admit that none of the short range options are by themselves going to work. The magnitude of communalism has become too large to respond to any immediate steps. What is immediately necessary is to initiate some long term process, so that at least some decades from today secularism will achieve some advance. This is not to say that steps to maintain communal harmony, curb communal tensions, propose a code of ethics for political parties, restrict communal communication in the media etc., should not be urgently undertaken. But let there be no illusion that these steps are adequate to tackle the problem of communalism.

The long term perspective

suggested relies mainly on the reorientation of the development process with a focus on the cultural and political processes. This reorientation has to be achieved through the politics of democratic rights so that the process of alienation of the deprived groups can be reversed.

There is an urgent need to reconsider the prevailing development model in India, specially its contemporary technomanagerial incarnation of the 'silicon state'. The process of development has to be decentralised and made participatory, so that its fruits are equitably shared between various identity groups and particularly the poor among them. In other words, development must enlarge the democratic rights of the deprived groups—the right to dignified living and the political, economic and cultural freedoms of the citizen.

This also involves a redefinition of the Indian Union. This "Union of States" was philosophically conceived as a Union of participating identities. The linguistic identities were to enjoy constitutional power. But each political unit was also a cluster of several religious and ethnic identities. Therefore, power was to be so arranged so as to ensure channels of participation for the various regional, religious, linguistic and ethnic identities. This is why the Indian Union was structurally designed as a multi layered polity with provincial (state), sub-regional (sub-state regional, district etc.) and lower levels all the way to the Panchayats.

Unfortunately, the operation of the Indian polity over the years has been in the opposite direction. The central leadership has abandoned the perspective of the decentralised federal polity. Besides the slogan of preserving unity and integrity, it has justified centralisation either in the name of reducing regional disparity, or in the name of curbing local conservatism, or for purposes of implementing a central plan of development. In each case it has shown a distrust in the capacity of the masses at the grassroot level to fight for their rights. Instead of aiding them as envisaged in the Constitution, it has practically suppressed such forces and has imposed its centralist rule. This ideology is now shared by several other opposition parties.

Besides a reorientation of the development model and a reassertion of the federal process of decentralisation, there has to be a comprehensive cultural policy to advance the movement for democratic values in India. Our educational system should be geared towards democratic values.

Thus, a long term perspective—a democratic rights perspective that calls for a reorientation of India's development strategy towards and equitable order, a federal polity and a democratic cultural process can perhaps generate new forces to combat communalism.

(Courtesy Lokyan Bulletin)

The Dynamics of Indian Television

Continued from page 16

Mr. Harish Khanna is a Communication specialist and former director General of Doordarshan

As in the case of economic policies, our information policies also betray an ambivalence not dissimilar to the one often observed in our artful concern for social equity and creating at the same time, serious inequalities. The same blurring of outlines is discernible in our approach to the cultural policy of national television.

linked local-regional stations been chosen. In spite of various difficulties, which later arose as a result of this technology choice, the expansion of television is and will remain in the annals of India as a most significant achievement, more so because it also provided great stimulus to the indigenous development of communication equipment of great variety within the country. It also created, for the first time, a countrywide audience. The speed with which the ownership of television sets has expanded from 4 million in 1975 to over 7 million in 1986, is a clear proof that in spite of certain politically oriented debates, the people, by and large, are ready and willing and quite a few of them are also able to welcome television in their lives.

Ideological Strategies

Technological developments moved much faster than ideological strategies. Quick to seize the money-churning machine was the advertising industry since introduction of commercials had been already accepted in 1976 without casting a long look forward as to how far the shadow of consumerism would fall. Equally eager to extend helping hand was the entertainment mode which had been experiencing seasonal variation. Creation of popular entertainment which is liked all over the country by professionals and skilled technicians which became possible as a result of access to a large market has not been an unwelcome development. Presentation techniques and mass appeal formats developed fast and a whole group of talent found expression. But in the absence of a well thought out design of creative entertainment in which interesting but socially significant programmes were also provided a fair chance to claim attention, the development was uneven giving rise to criticism.

It is ironic to observe that while social-response analytical programmes quite a few of which were started in the last three to four years fought for certain values, some of the entertainment programmes unwittingly project models of social behaviour, and life styles etc quite alien to our culture. For instance, while status of women is presented as a key issue, at the same time, some programmes display the most cynical exploitation of women as mere sex objects or mechanical dolls. Programmes for children and the youth have seldom been oriented towards national objectives either, and

whenever done it was most awkward. Fortunately, television has been careful about the handling of crime and violence because of the increasing appreciation of the relationship between exposure to television violence and aggressive behaviour, but the recent onslaught of revenge-centred movies on the same network, has gone unchallenged.

Film after film has been seen to be indirectly justifying settling scores macho style on one's own because the machinery of law is too tardy. Propagation of this ethic would certainly damage our social fabric, stretched as it is by caste hatred and group tensions. The barbaric cult of the gun has caused serious concern in the West, but not as much in our country, which is experiencing slowly spreading violence, terrorism, and nihilistic dispensation of ego-centric justice. Such fall desensitises the susceptible viewer who comes to see glamorised crime not as a condemnable observation but an accepted fact of life about which one could not do much.

Access to media generally follows the dynamics of power and influence. Since television is perceived as an instrument with potentially powerful impact on social, political and economic issues, individuals and groups seek to influence and manipulate it. Unfortunately the development of the national network has coincided with the resurgence of regionalism, caste and language dominated politics, narrow sub-cultural loyalties and social and political activity in the name of cultural identity. I am of the view that the criticism of the national network and the so-called imposition of one culture over the other does not arise out of any serious concern for social good, the pressure is maintained to advance political aims. But if the programme had been presented in a truly national perspective encouraging the people to share experience to enrich life, there will be no hostility.

The Government has been responsive to this criticism as is evident from current and projected developments. Three regional networks in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are already in existence. Future projections visualise the creation of a parallel national service as distinct from the regional service which includes the local service wherever feasible or desirable. These steps are in hand to correct some of the unavoidable consequences of the technology decision based on the precedence of the national network over the

regional and the local services.

The Dilemma

These correctives are to be welcomed as realistic and practical responses. But in the absence of a policy framework eternal dilemma would, however, remain. Should Indian television walk ahead of social change or merely follow it, passively reflecting what is going on? Is a creative synthesis of the two roles possible and, if so, what should be the ingredients of policy in that regard?

Early in 1987, the former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Dr Manmohan Singh, had lamented over the fact that television had come to fall in the grip of a powerful commercial consumerist lobby and had thus emerged as a medium catering merely to the entertainment needs of the urban middle classes, ignoring the interests of vast sections of society. Before him, the report of the Working Group on Software for Doordarshan prepared by an august committee under the chairmanship of Dr. P C Joshi, had observed with regret that the Nehru and Sarabhai approach of tapping the communication revolution in general and television in particular as a major weapon in the fight against poverty and illiteracy and for mass-oriented growth and development, had been ignored. The Group had noted with concern that very often a narrow Delhi-centric view of India was being projected through Doordarshan and by and large urban India was getting precedence over rural India and the Indian elite over the masses, which cannot afford to own television individually. Based on this analysis, the committee presented the blue-print of a new system of television programming and management and laid emphasis on the most urgent need of providing at least one television set to each village for community viewing with special access to weaker sections of society as a priority item of the 20-point programme. Reminding the country of its commitment to Socialism, in terms of the Constitution as amended in 1976, the people's access to television was regarded by the group as a crucial test of the social relevance of an expensive means of communication. In politico-cultural terms, the committee came to the conclusion that Doordarshan could perhaps never acquire an Indian personality unless and until it gave up the identification of India only with the newly emerging Indian middle-class.

Joshi Committee too cognisance of the fact that the way the special plan for the expansion of television in the country had been conceived, planned and implemented, the urban bias of the content was unavoidable, it, therefore, recommended the creation of cellular modules at each low power or high power transmitter so that it would be merely used for relaying a centrally produced programme but also a locally produced programme obviously in the

language of the community and, therefore, of greater relevance and acceptability, I wish the Committee had evaluate the situation more critical because a transmitter does not become a programme-originating station merely with the addition of a mobile recording apparatus and a small studio. It would merely scratch the surface though even this would be more comforting and socially significant. However, the report is still under consideration.

I do not recall a single statement by a person in authority questioning the validity of the thesis that in order that television is able to fully explore the socio-cultural dynamics of the medium, it must develop content possessing the widest possible acceptance. Yet no concrete action is in sight. There may be a notion that like all previous essays in communication idealism, the Joshi Committee dream would also evaporate under the impact of inexorable attrition caused by the status quo!

Urbans vs Rural

Many people still harp on the urban versus rural debate. Is it the extension of pseudo-socialistic doctrine expounded only to corner votes or to needle the reluctant to fall in line and, of course, give a gentle push to the gullible to jump into the net? I wish one were on surer ground. At the heart of the matter lies the fundamental question—television for what purpose and for whom—an issue which was recently addressed in a feedback project undertaken by Nameda. It was conceived without any difference of opinion that television should be geared to the fulfilment of national goals and objectives and the priorities with regard to the allocation of time should reflect adherence to these objectives in preference to building up of personalities or causes espoused by the establishment. Perhaps the most significant observation in the report is that in a media system where technology is far ahead of creativity, it is bound to become counter-productive. It noted that the proliferation of transmitters does not necessarily mean promoting national integration. It also took note of the concern that strengthening of regional centres in the present environment could lead to the threat of fissiparousness. But this argument was countered by the assertion that presentation of regional culture, if done imaginatively and sincerely, would contribute to national integration rather than encourage fissiparous tendencies. The educational role of television was highlighted as indeed its great role in creating a scientific temper amongst the masses provided it is ensured that obscurantism is not unwittingly permitted. Insofar as the basic question of launching a new management structure is concerned, the consensus was in favour of television being established as an autonomous public trust rather than a states monopoly. Although the Nameda exercise was

undertaken at the suggestion of the Government and the Planning Commission, there is no indication as to the final dispensation.

Entertainment and Information

The question whether entertainment is reconcilable with the needs of information is asked whenever popular task seeks to become the arbiter. So much so, that one occasionally hears of a suggestion that let an alternate channel, preferably as a purely commercial venture, be allowed, devoted exclusively to popular entertainment. Nothing could be more short-sighted and disastrous. Excessive reliance on easy to sell entertainment tends to blunt the creative ingenuity of television producers. Fortunately for us this trend has been consciously discouraged encouraging at the same time programme on wild life, environmental degradation, drug addiction, silent ostracisation of the underprivileged, social evils etc. which are as interesting as action-based fiction. Besides, such programmes enable the viewers to look at life critically and empathise with the victims of injustice.

There is fairly convincing evidence in our own country that television can perform the crucial role of a catalyst of socio-economic action. By itself and in isolation it cannot do much, but when introduced in a specifically designed chemistry, it can set in motion important reactions which may originate from the ingredients of the mix but often display distinct characteristics. Similarly, television can and in an open democratic society should awaken the people, raise debates and even cause action by impelling group responses through genuine conscientisation. Once the people cultivate the culture of critical awareness, once the people learn to look for the causes of apparent phenomena and positions, they do, before long, learn to discover lines of thought and autonomous action. Television, used in this fashion, is a liberating influence eroding apathy and stimulating activism.

As in the case of economic policies, our information policies also betray an ambivalence not dissimilar to the one often observed in our artful concern for social equity and creating at the same time, serious inequalities. The same blurring of outlines is discernible in our approach to the cultural policy of national television.

The question which needs urgent attention is whether television should exercise the role of a homogenizer in a society of extreme ethnic and cultural diversity or it should stand along those who for obvious political reasons advocate preservation of regional identity. It seems to me that while there is an indisputable case for local stations as also for regional networks to serve as a vehicle for the artistic exposition of local regional cultures, the projection of the basic aesthetic and spiritual unity between these cultures is also of paramount importance.

The Dynamics of Indian Television

A Search for Balance

Indian Television has come to reflect the ambivalence, the genteel hypocrisy of our system, which is supportive of inertia. It also reflects the political, moral and intellectual confusion into which we have landed, choosing the easy path of a loosely structured evolution as against either a principle-based revolution, or a carefully conceived and sustained evolution along predetermined lines. The intellectual and political leadership behind our media and cultural policies seems too shy to assail the status-quo, which has always provided secure shelter to vested interests and abiding protection to instruments of authority. There have been changes but more often than not these are hasty answers to sudden eruptions, or, at best, clutching ready expedients. That is why the intelligent viewer is left bewildered, seldom convinced by such off-the-cuff explanations as are given from time to time.

That this should be the situation after varied activity of a quarter century and access to the rich experience in the field of radio as well as existence of a sound philosophy eloquently expressed in the directive principles of the Constitution, is, to say the least, pathetic. It seems to me that the reason for this sorry situation lies in the fact that our television planning has been technology-oriented and not ideology-oriented. In spite of repeated commitment to the role of information in the process of modernisation and rapid diffusion of change-producing ideas, continuing dialogue for growth and development and, more particularly, recognition of the role of powerful medium of television for cultural synthesis, political solidarity and the creation of an enlightened society, the basic problems of nature of content; reach versus out-reach availability versus access and the related issues regarding attitudinal reformation of the manpower engaged in using electronic tools, still remain. However, of late in response to incessant debate on the role and unrealized possibilities of Television as well as the distortions which have actually developed, search is on for a balance.

In a severely segmented society such as ours, a perfect equilibrium between conflicting demands and interests may not be easy to find. But this search may lead to a clearer perception of the socio-cultural dynamics of this potent medium. It may also provide the required propulsion-thrust to overcome handicaps created by technology choices made earlier.

The Technology

It is generally accepted that technology often determines the content and even the style of television. The present day controversies about the need for national television, inter se priorities of programme interests and the demand for decentralised

television preferably under the control of state governments or local authorities are born out of political impulses of the mid-seventies as much as of social processes. Arguments related to cultural identity are quite relevant but what is actually meant to be asserted is political identity. All such arguments rest on the belief that access to television facilitates access to power. It is interesting, however, to observe that the apparent contradiction between unitarian and pluralistic impulses has its roots in the basic technology decisions made in two quick spurts in the seventies and the eighties, backed up by substantial investments in the infrastructure and organisation.

At the time of the first introduction of television in 1959, its primary use for information and education was easily accepted and, therefore, the first phase logically emphasised use of television in the class room. The most natural extension of the use of television was in the area of civic concerns. We must recall excellent social reportage, analytical topical features, programmes for industrial workers etc. That was the period of lower, limited range but high social content television. However, before long, the class which had come to dominate the print medium, the radio etc. moved in to possess the new medium of television. By a time-sharing mechanism, an attempt was made to satisfy varied interests in some measure, but the process of deviation had come in motion. The most decisive factor to determine the shape of things to come was the locational strategy with an obvious and inescapable urban bias. In due course, the locational strategy dictated the organisation of transmitters and studios in the metropolitan and other major cities, which in a way predetermined the audience and, therefore, the content of programmes.

When the real first steps towards the expansion of television in India were taken in the late sixties, several choices were considered. The most begetting was creation of major stations to be subsequently linked by means of extended microwave circuits of which a large number were being planned as a part and parcel of the national telecommunication plan. That would gradually build into a network. Then came SITE in 1985 as a natural sequel to the access to space communication technology. The one-year experiment may not have been a total success insofar as the declared development objectives were concerned, but it was a most remarkable landmark in the use of television as a powerful manipulator of socio-cultural factors. It not only opened up new possibilities of networking and extension of television into totally backward areas where virtually no communications

existed, it also proved the intrinsic strength of the medium to convey valuable information of direct significance to the lives of the common people such as health, nutrition, childcare etc. In a limited way, it also spelt out the possibility of a quantum jump the dissemination of knowledge in spite of the traditional barriers of illiteracy. Involved were several backward areas in different parts of India and people speaking different languages.

The late Vikram Sarabhai, the main force behind that innovative application had the vision to see that the advantages of globalisation of

Harish Khanna

communications had to be harmonised with the demands of local relevance. Seeds of an integrated television system were laid in the search for a system which would make technology serve the interest of national objectives of mass education and development. But even at that time, the early signs of local regional-national conflict could be presaged. Had he lived longer, his incisive mind and creative imagination would have found the answers and invented the missing links. What is of greater significance is the fact that had a policy

perspective regarding the preferred role of television preceded the expansion of infrastructure of the eighties as was advocated by him, perhaps better advantage could have been taken of the technological assets which were soon to become available. But that was not to be. Availability of Insat 1B fired the imagination of technocrats so much that creation of hardware came to be the principal goal.

As was anticipated, television planning chose the fast route and was able to achieve the notable feat of creating an almost nationwide infrastructure in about five years as against the original picture of 25 to 30 years, had the first alternative of micro-wave

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